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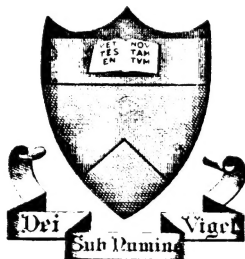
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A WIFE IN THE RIGHT:

A

C O M E D Y.



A WIFE IN THE RIGHT:

A

COMEDY.

Elegant (Griffiths)
BY MRS. GRIFFITH,



L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR,

And sold by Mess. E. and C. DILLY, in the Poultry, J. ROBSON,
New Bond-street, and J. WALTER, at Charing Cross,

M.DCC.LXXII.

P R E F A C E.

THE Author of this Address is so perfectly sensible of how little consequence such writings are to the public, that she would most willingly have declined troubling them on this occasion, were she not impelled to it by two very strong motives; a desire of vindicating herself from some of the charges brought against the following comedy, from the interpolations thrown into one of the principal parts, on the night of performance; and the earnest wish of expressing the sincere gratitude she is sensible of to the public in general, and to her friends in particular, for the generous patronage they have shewn towards the publication of this little piece, which with true humility and diffidence she now submits to their candor and indulgence.

The author certainly had no reason to have apprehended the unlucky event of this comedy, after the very favourable opinion which Mr. Colman, who is undoubtedly a competent judge of dramatic compositions, had expressed of it,
all

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P R E F A C E.

all along, from the time he received it, in July 1770, when he pronounced it "to bid fairer, both for fame and profit, than any of her theatrical writings," to the day of its representation, in March last, on the morning of which he offered "to underwrite its success, for half a crown."

However, she confesses that, for some time before the exhibition, she had sufficient cause to be alarmed, on account of Mr. Shuter, who had a long and principal part in the comedy, seldom attending the rehearsals; and when he did, being found to be extremely imperfect—The author remonstrated upon this occasion, and the manager indeed lamented the difficulty along with her, but redressed it not.

At length though late, a day was appointed for the representation, and on that morning Mr. Shuter appeared at rehearsal, pretty much in the same state as before, and confessed himself incapable of performing his part, that night. Upon which the play was obliged to be further postponed, and hand-bills were sent about at noon, to advertise the town of the disappointment.

This was a most unlucky circumstance for the author. The curiosity of the public palls upon such delays, and many of her friends, who had waited in London to attend the performance, went into the country, concluding, from the uncertainty of the performer, joined
to

P R E F A C E.

to the lateness of the season, that the comedy could not be exhibited, this year.

A further and final day was afterwards determined on, but the audience being out of humour at their former disappointment, called Mr. Shuter to account for it, on his first appearance; which threw him into such a confusion, that he was not able to get the better of it, throughout the whole performance.

This untoward incident occasioned two very considerable disadvantages to the piece. In the hurry of his spirits the actor not only forgot his part, the deficiency of which he endeavoured to supply with his own dialect, but also seemed to lose all idea of the character he was to perform; and made the Governor appear in a light which the author never intended; that of a mean, ridiculous buffoon. This unlucky failure in the performer, was, by some, unfortunately imputed to the writer, and appeared to be a sufficient reason for condemning the piece.

Yet, notwithstanding these almost insuperable disadvantages, the play was suffered to proceed, without any sort of reprehension, except in the instance above-mentioned, and the Epilogue concluding with these lines,

“ The author for your passport trembling stands,

“ And hopes you'll grant it *under all your hands,*”

received the fullest approbation from the audience, without one single dissenting voice.

Many

P R E F A C E.

Many of her friends immediately quitted the theatre, in perfect assurance of the favourable event, and came to wish her joy that the comedy had been sufficiently strong to struggle thro' such hazardous circumstances, as before recited. But the pleasure she received on this occasion, was extremely transient, for she was in a few minutes after informed, that when the play was going to be given out, for the next night, some obscure persons, in a corner of the gallery, objected to it, who were opposed by a considerable majority in all parts of the house; but that after this kind of altercation had been continued, for some minutes, the council behind the curtain, taking alarm at an apple being flung from the upper gallery, and striking a branch of one of the chandeliers, thought proper to obey the malicious, who are ever the most active, rather than the friendly, part of the audience, and withdrew the play.

Whether this opposition arose from ill-nature, or ill-temper, cannot be now determined; tho' the latter cause is full sufficient to account for the effect, as every one knows how dangerous a thing it must always be, to suffer an audience to be out of humour, at a first representation of any dramatic performance; and on this account it would certainly have been prudent to have brought Mr. Shuter before them, in some of his more perfect characters, between the night of the first and *second* disappointment, in order to have palliated the

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the resentment of the public, so as to have prevented any interruption to the performance, on that account, at least.

By the advice of those friends who were present, the author went, that night, to Mr. Colman's house, to confer with him upon this unexpected ebb of fortune. He seemed to be much affected with it himself, expressed a friendly concern at her disappointment, and promised to consult with the rest of the proprietors, upon what compensation or redress it might be reasonable to make her, upon this occasion. But the next morning he sent her a letter to acquaint her, that "all her prospects from that quarter must be at an end, for that she was to expect nothing farther from the theatre."

The author happened to receive this severe sentence in the midst of a large circle of her friends, who were then with her, offering their services, for that night, to bring on the comedy again, engaging to prove the positive part of the audience superior to the negative one, upon that trial. But this kind and well-intentioned offer she declined.

She adhered to the same moderation, also, the next day, when the same offer was again repeated, and seconded by several persons, before unknown to her, but who seemed to consider hers as a common cause against oppression, and declared a full confidence of carrying,
b the

P R E F A C E.

the point against any opposition that might be attempted.

The author does not deny that she felt resentment, and was sensible of injustice, all the while; but she feared the consequence of a riot to the manager's property; choosing to suffer an injury, rather than to do one.

All this temper and conduct was then calmly represented to the manager, both by letter, and the interposition of friends, but no notice was taken of it. The author confesses that she then made a claim of right, to some compensation, upon the late occasion, but not till after it had been refused her, as a matter of favour. She founded her demand, upon the usage, which is the only law of theatres, and quoted many precedents of the same kind; some of them in circumstances too, far more unfavourable to the client; but neither *custom*, nor *courtesy*, it seems, were to be allowed sufficient pleas, in her most singular case.

The author does not mean, by any thing the situation of this affair has obliged her to say here, to charge Mr. Colman with the least design to her injury, by any part of his conduct, throughout. She believes him to have been perfectly sincere in his professions, and ingenuous in his purposes towards her; and has seen him mortified and concerned to the last degree, at the delays and disappointments she met with, tho' he did not sufficiently exert his authority to prevent, or remedy them.

The

P R E F A C E.

The author's friends, upon finding that she would not avail herself, in the way they had first recommended, advised her to publish the comedy, by subscription; as well to vindicate her writing from the misrepresentation of the night of performance, as to make herself some small amends for the considerable loss and mortification she had sustained, from its failure.

This kind proposal she has most gratefully accepted of; and after repeating here her acknowledgments to the public, and her friends, for the liberal encouragement they have shewn her, upon this, and every occasion, she takes this opportunity also of returning her thanks to the other performers in her comedy, who took the pains to be perfect in their several parts, and so well endeavoured to support the spirit of their respective characters, amidst the hurry and confusion which so unhappily interrupted the course of the performance.

She now begs leave to make an apology for having presumed to claim so much of the public attention, on a subject relative merely to herself; and with the sincerest gratitude has the honour to subscribe herself their much obliged, and most obedient servant,

THE AUTHOR.

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PROLOGUE,

PROLOGUE,

WRITTEN BY MR. COLMAN,

And spoken by Mrs. BULKLEY.

*B**Y* your leave, critics! To a female play
A female prologue may prepare the way.
Among the Chronicles of modern fame
Who has not read of gentle Frances' name?
Henry and Frances! a fond tender pair,
Whose soft epistles still amuse the fair.
Some nights ago our couple, all alone,
A fire-side tête-à-tête—Darby and Joan—
Frances, said Henry, give up writing; men,
And men alone should dare to wield the pen.
Your sex of late all decency confounds,
And breaks 'twixt us and them the modest bounds.
Whether from passion, love of pow'r or riches,
Women, we see, all like to wear the breeches.
At sea some madcaps enter volunteers,
Some in the army list as grenadiers:
Others write hist'ries, state-intrigues unriddle,
Ride the great horse, and play upon the fiddle.
Gently, cries Frances; truce with your reproaches!
And mark which sex on t'other most encroaches.
Soft silky coxcombs, full of nice puntilio,
All paste, pomatum, essence, and pulvilio,
With huge bouquets, like boughpots, daily go,
Trick'd out like dolls, to pace in Rotten-row.
Thus flies the morning; and the day to crown,
To quince and faro ev'ry fop sits down.

Each

P R O L O G U E.

*Each coat so trim, lest any speck fall on it,
An apron guards,—each forehead a straw-bonnet;
Nay lest rouleaus themselves should soil their ruffles,
A muffatee each pretty master muffles.*

*Women in vain to keep their place have striven;
From ev'ry trade, from each profession driven.
Men-midwives swarm; men mantuas make, make stays,
Dress hair, dress meat—let women then write plays!
While narrow prejudice deform'd the age,
No actress play'd, no female trod the stage;
Some smooth unrazor'd youth for Juliet rav'd,
And Kings sat waiting till the Queen was shav'd;
But woman once brought forward on the scene,
By man, like Eve, was lik'd as soon as seen.*

*Let females then compose, as well as play,
And strive to please you in the noblest way!
No sulky critic to the play-house drawn,
Whom modern comedy provokes to yawn,
But marks of authors past the valu'd file,
And owns Centlivre tempted him to smile.
Why may not Ladies too in future plays,
Strike a Bold Stroke, and, anxious for the bays,
New Busy Bodies form, new Wonders raise?* }

*Thus Frances spoke, and bid her dear good night—
And Henry own'd his Wife was in the Right.*

Dramatis

Dramatis Personæ.

M E N,

LORD SEATON,	Mr. Smith.
Colonel RAMSAY,	Mr. Bensley.
Governor ANDERSON,	Mr. Shuter.
BULL, a Broker,	Mr. Quick.
SQUEEZEM, a Borough Jobber,	Mr. Kniveton.
VARNISH, a Coach-maker,	Mr. Morris.
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WATERS, Servant to Lord Seaton.	

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Lucy, Maid to Mrs. Frankly.	
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S C E N E, London.

A WIFE IN THE RIGHT.

A C T I.

SCENE, A DRESSING ROOM.

Lady SEATON and Mrs. MARKAM.

Lady SEATON.

I TELL you, Markam, 'tis impossible! I neither can, nor will believe it. What! Charlotte Melville! The companion of my youth, the confidant of my heart! could she form a connection so unworthy of herself! I say again, it must be impossible.

Mark. To be sure, Ma'am, if you don't chuse to believe it, I can't undertake to convince your Ladyship; but I think the proofs are sufficiently strong, on my side of the question—and if I had such a husband—

Lady Sea. Learn to speak with more respect of Lord Seaton, Markam.

A

Mark.

Mark. I beg pardon, Ma'am, but I was in a little sort of flurry, to think of your Ladyship's being so ungratefully used, by—

Lady Sea. Stop, I command you.

Mark. Why, Ma'am, if your Ladyship won't hear what one has to say, you can never expect to come at the truth, surely.

Lady Sea. That, however, I wish to learn; therefore, now tell me upon what circumstances you ground your suspicions?

Mark. In the first place, Ma'am, did not Miss Melville elope, as it were, from this house, without so much as letting *me* know where she was going to, just a few days before you were married?

Lady Sea. I can account for Charlotte's quitting me, at that time, but too well, Markam!

Mark. May be, Ma'am, you can account for her clandestine correspondence with my Lord, also.

Lady Sea. A clandestine correspondence with Lord Seaton! What do you mean, Markam?

Mark. Mean! I mean what I say, Ma'am. These very eyes saw her receive a letter from him.

Lady Sea. Not from *my* Lord——From Lord Seaton, Markam!

Mark. Yes, Ma'am, from *your* Ladyship's Lord—Lord Seaton.

Lady Sea. Now you indeed amaze me!

Mark. She was sitting in the very next room, just there at the harpsichord—and sweetly she does play, to be sure—I happened to be standing in this very spot, settling the toilette, Ma'am—I love a little music dearly, and I did stop to listen, I own; but without thinking any sort of harm,
heaven

heaven knows ;—for I then took her to be as innocent as the child unborn—when—

Lady Sea. So I still wish to think her. But proceed.

Mark. When, as I was saying, Ma'am, in steps my Lord ; and with the very same sort of bow that he used to make to your Ladyship—for you know he was courting, at that time—Miss Melville, said he, I have long languished—yes—*languished* was the word, Ma'am, for an opportunity of speaking to you, upon a subject of the utmost importance to my happiness.

Lady Sea. What subject ?

Mark. Why that, indeed, he did not directly say, Ma'am ;—but really, I don't think it so very difficult to guess. But you shall hear, Ma'am—Whereabouts was I ? O, where he *languished for an opportunity* ; but despairing to find one, continued he, I have taken the liberty of conveying my sentiments to you in writing. So saying he laid a letter down upon the harpsichord, and I made the best of my way out of this room, for fear of being seen.

Lady Sea. Grant all this to be true, it does not prove her guilty.

Mark. She had no need to blush, then, if she was innocent ; and I warrant your Ladyship that her face was as red as your Morro satin, all the while my Lord was talking to her ; though it is naturally pure and pale, you know, at any other time. I never was deceived in looks, in my life ; and it was by Dolly Sly, the housemaid's blushing, that I found out the affair between her and George the groom, last summer.

Lady Sea. Drop your absurd comparisons ; and tell me, Markam, why you did not mention this

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circumstance to me, before I was married? It might have served me, then! (*Sigs.*)

Mark. Why really, Ma'am, it would have been a very indiscreet thing in me, and contrary to my own interest, as well as your Ladyship's, to have made mischief between my Lord and you, before you were married. It might have broken off the match, perhaps, and then every servant in the house would have been a loser, as well as I, Ma'am. But when once the wedding should be over, and all secured, I resolved to watch her closely, and if I saw any thing wrong, to acquaint your Ladyship with it then, when it could do no harm. But they have been too cunning for us, this trip. For to be sure and certain, she is now with my Lord, at his house in the country.

Lady Sea. Impossible! I will not listen to this idle tale, spun out of your own imagination, without a single proof or even probable conclusion to support it. Again I tell you that you are deceived, and that Miss Melville's tenderness for me admits of no dispute.

Mark. Her tenderness, indeed? A plague on all such tenderness, I say.

Lady Sea. You grow intemperate, Markam. Leave me, and order Thomas to try at every stand in London, to find out the chair that carried Miss Melville from this house.

Mark. It is above a month ago, since she left us, and I mightily doubt whether Thomas will be able to recollect either the chairmen or their number, at this distance.

Lady Sea. Do as I direct, without surmises.

Mark. I'll send Thomas, instantly, Ma'am.
(A pretty sort of wild goose chase, truly. *Aside.*)

[*Exit,*
Lady

Lady Sea. This affair of the letter has tended but too much to convince me of my Lord's attachment to Charlotte—but how is she to blame? Did she take advantage of his passion for her, or strive to supplant me in his heart? O! no, I only am in fault.—My ill-timed coldness and reserve banished my friend, and has deprived me of that more than sisterly affection which had ever subsisted between us. I will not rest till I atone my conduct towards her; for in spite of all that Markam says, my heart by sympathy assures me of her innocence.

Enter MARKAM.

Mark. My Lord, Ma'am, is just arrived. (I hope she'll be in a better humour, now, since he is returned. *Aside.*)

Lady Sea. And how does he look, pray? He has been absent, I think, these ten days.

Mark. Look! Ma'am—Why just as he used to do, to be sure.—Ten days! Why what is that in a gentleman's life, Ma'am? Though truly your Ladyship has moped yourself pale again, in that time, with fretting about him, and that plaguy Miss Melville.

Lady Sea. Be silent, I command you.

Mark. (What the duce makes her so cross, of late? one had as good be dumb, if they are not allowed to speak. *Aside.*)

Lady Sea. And where is my Lord? did he ask for me?

Mark. He was following me up to wait on you, Ma'am, when Colonel Ramsay, just arrived from abroad, came into the house.

Lady

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Lady Sea. Colonel Ramsay ! what shall I say to him, or how account for Charlotte's abrupt departure from my house ?

Mark. In truth, Ma'am, if I was you, I'd throw all the blame on Miss Melville ; for I am sure, that your Ladyship never used her ill, in the least, but was as civil and distant to her, latterly, as if she had been a duchess.

Lady Sea. That was the worst of usage, Markam, but retire— [Exit Markam.]

Enter Lord SEATON and Colonel RAMSAY.

Lady Sea. My dearest Lord. (*Advancing towards him.*)

Lord Sea. My dear, your most obedient. (*Bows gravely.*)

Lady Sea. So cold and distant ! (*Aside.*)

Col. Though my congratulations come late, I hope you will permit me to give you joy, Madam, and accept my best wishes for your Ladyship's happiness.

Lady Sea. I am much obliged to you, Colonel.

Col. Pray, Madam, how does our fair friend ? After so long an absence may I not be permitted the pleasure of seeing Miss Melville ?

Lady Sea. I wish, Sir, both for your sake and hers, that this was in my power ; but—

Col. You alarm me, Madam. Where is Miss Melville ?

Lady Sea. Indeed, Sir, I know not ; but much wish I did, for my own sake.

Col. Surely, Madam, if she hath withdrawn herself from your protection, she must have had some very extraordinary reasons for it.

Lord

Lord Sea. Female friendships, you know, Charles, are not among the perennials of life.

Col. That is a mere common-place reflection, my Lord, adapted only to the very triflers of the sex. I have been acquainted with Miss Melville, even from her infancy, and never knew any person more intirely governed by sense, prudence, and proper affections.

Lord Sea. Why, Colonel, you are entering into a serious defence of one whom I had not the least design of accusing.—There are two ladies in the question, you know; and if either was to blame, mine might, *possibly*, be the one in fault; for I have not been able to discover any symptoms of infallibility, in her Ladyship, yet.

Lady Sea. I pretend not to perfection, my Lord, but hope I am incapable of acting—

Lord Sea. Wrong.—Doubtless, Madam. But errors in judgment, I suppose, you'll admit to be the common lot of frail mortality.

Lady Sea. I feel it severely, in myself, my Lord, but cannot, however, avoid thinking it cruel to add to the distress I am already sensible of on Miss Melville's account.

Lord Sea. Quite barbarous, I confess, Madam, —but husbands are savages, it seems.

Lady Sea. I neither said, nor thought so, my Lord; but I have done.

Lord Sea. Charles, you'll dine with us, to-day.

Lady Sea. I join in the request, Sir.

Col. I shall attend your Ladyship.

Lord Sea. Are there any letters for me, Lady Seaton?

Lady Sea. There are some, my Lord, shall I send them to you?

Lord

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Lord Sea. Yes, if you please.

[*Exit Lady Seaton.*]

Col. May I presume, my Lord, upon the privilege of former friendship, to speak my sentiments freely to you, on the present occasion?

Lord Sea. Why, I think, Charles, that this same former friendship you hint at, has rendered us so thoroughly acquainted with each other, that I am not to expect any thing very new, in the sentimental dialect, I suppose, at present. But proceed—a story may be good, though 'tis an old one.

Col. Why then, my Lord, I will frankly confess to you that I feel myself hurt at your behaviour to Lady Seaton, just now.

Lord Sea. Why that is pretty concise, truly, Colonel.

Col. Remember, my Lord, the condition stipulated, and then suffer me to tell you, that there is something so unmanly, in treating a woman ill, especially one within our power, that had I not been a witness to the *unpoliteness*, I shall only say, of your speech and manner toward Lady Seaton, I could never have given credit to it.

Lord Sea. Well, well, Charles, I believe I might have behaved a little too harshly to her Ladyship, upon this occasion; but I own I was displeased at her seeming to cast the blame of her quitting the house, upon the dear girl—

Col. What girl, my Lord? You do not speak of Miss Melville, sure.

Lord Sea. Miss Melville! O! no, no—my wife—'twas her I meant—dear foolish girl, I say, to quarrel with her friend.

Col. So then, my Lord, you think that she did quarrel with her.

Lord

Lord Sea. Why, you can't suppose, Colonel, that there could possibly have been any other reason for Miss Melville's quitting Lady Seaton's house. For my own part—

Col. Nay, my Lord, I know not what to think; but as there appears to be some sort of mystery, in this affair, I shall write to my sister, Mrs. Freeman, this night, between whom and Lady Seaton her affections were equally divided, and with whom I hope she is, at present. Two years absence have left me scarce any other clue to trace her by. But I shall never cease from the pursuit, till I have recovered my lost treasure, the lovely Charlotte.

Lord Sea. Tho' you should find her, Colonel, she may, possibly, be lost to you—Two years constancy to an absent lover, Charles! How can you be so unconscionable to expect it?

Col. I have not the least doubt of it, my Lord, nor shall I ever suspect my mistress of inconstancy, or my friend of infidelity, 'till I detect a failure in my own heart, that may warrant theirs. I neither love, nor like, lightly, my Lord, and of course, do not lightly change.

Lord Sea. I am glad to hear it, Charles, as I think I may now venture to introduce you, this evening, to a very fine woman, who may, possibly, put your boasted constancy to the trial.

Col. I wish, both for Lady Seaton's sake, and your own, my Lord, that your heart was as much proof against the allurements of profligate beauty, as mine is. But I have no leisure to make the experiment you mention, at present, as every moment of my time shall be devoted to my search after Miss Melville.

B

Lord

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Lord Sea. I rather fancy you doubt your own strength, Colonel, and would not afford me the triumph of discovering your weakness. But 'tis worth the hazard, believe me, Charles.

Col. Your Lordship must excuse me. I have better purposes for my love and youth, than to sacrifice them on Circe's altar.

Lord Sea. You must certainly have struck out some very unmodern tour for yourself, Charles, to have brought home such an antique moral as this from your travels.

Col. In this my Lord—

The GOVERNOR behind the scenes.

Gov. I tell you, 'tis a much finer hand, that ever you wrote, even before you wore spectacles.

Lord Sea. Not a word more on this subject, Charles—Here comes the Governor, my wife's uncle, and for your entertainment I hope his umbrella, his secretary, his valet de chambre, or whatever else he pleases to call him, is with him; for I really think he is as great a curiosity as has ever been imported from the coast of Coromandel.

Col. There must certainly be something extraordinary in a person who has contrived to unite, in a single individual, such a plurality of characters, and I should be glad to know something more of him.

Lord Sea. He was originally a country school-master, whom the Governor carried with him to India, and there used him as his private secretary; but on his return to England, having no further occasion for him, in that capacity, he has now degraded him to the state of his valet de chambre ;
while

while the mortified pride of poor *propria quæ maribus*, makes him affect to shew his learning, upon all occasions, to vindicate a superiority over his master.

Enter the GOVERNOR, in a loose Indian habit.

Gov. I am glad your Lordship is come home again. Here has been as much sighing and groaning, as if you had gone an India voyage, to take a tilting-bout with Heyder-Ally—Do you know that fellow, Captain? He's a stout buck, I assure you.

Col. No, Sir, I have only heard of his fame.

Gov. I have some letters for you, Nephew—I took them from Mrs. Markam, as she was bringing them hither, about a quarter of an hour ago, being impatient to know if your Lordship had any accounts from Madrafs, or Bombay.—Early Intelligence is of the last consequence to us poor piddlers in the Stocks.—A man may make some thousands by it in a morning, you know, Captain.

Col. I am utterly unacquainted with the business of the Alley, Sir.

Gov. (Then I would not give a single rupee for your knowledge. *Aside.*)

Lord Sea. But where are my letters, Governor?

Gov. Safe enough, I'll warrant you. (*Takes them out of his pocket.*) Look at that hand, Nephew, I'll be hang'd if any of your correspondents write such another. Pray observe the *ll*'s, and the *rr*'s of it—Curious, indeed!

Lord Sea. I am only curious about the matter, and not the manner of writing; therefore pray, Sir, give me my letters.

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Gov. Well, it may be so, but I think, now, that a fine hand—(*looks at one of the letters*)—by the way, if I guess right, this is a female scrawl.

Lord Sea. Suppose it should, Governor, you have no reason to be jealous, as you have no wife living.

Gov. No, heaven be praised,—poor dear Bab's at peace. But as you have one, my Lord, she may perhaps think she has a right to be jealous of your receiving billet-doux's—I used to have a sad time of it, with her aunt, upon that score, I'll assure you. We have had twenty squabbles a-day, sometimes.

Lord Sea. 'Tis from my charming widow, Charles. (*Aside.*)

Col. Your female correspondents must have been very numerous, I presume, Sir.

Gov. Pretty well, that way, you may suppose, Sir, for before my last trip to India, I was called Handsome Ned Anderson, d'ye see. Am I much altered, think you?

Col. I had not the pleasure of knowing you then, Sir.

Gov. (*This fellow knows nothing. Aside.*) But even then, Sir, I don't take upon me to say that I used to receive a score of love-letters, every day—I am no boaster, Captain, tho' I have been a favourite, in my time, let me tell you. But what with her jealousy, and other slight causes, my poor dear wife and I used to contrive a wrangling-bout, for every hour in the day. You can't imagine how much I missed her, for the first two or three months, after she died. But time—time, Captain, gets the better of every thing.

Col. Doubtless, Sir.—I fancy, my Lord, the hour of dressing draws nigh, and as the Governor seems

seems to have a good deal to do, in that way, I think it but fair to allow him leisure for it.

Lord Sea. We shall meet, at four, Colonel.

Col. Certainly. [Exit.

Gov. Drefs!—What silly fops you Europeans are!—Why can't a man sit down and eat his victuals, in a comfortable easy habit, instead of being cased up in a strait waistcoat, like a mad-man, d'ye see? But my Lady, my niece, don't like it, I presume.

Lord Sea. Why really, Governor, tho' your apparel may be perfectly convenient, to yourself, I should think it rather too easy and familiar a garb, for the company of ladies.

Gov. Why there now, what a pragmatistical world do we live in! your wife is my niece, and yet I must suffer myself to be bound up to my good behaviour, forsooth, before I can be allowed to sit down to table with her; more than if I was to dine with the Sultana of Persia.

Lord Sea. We are all too much bound up in forms and fashions, I confess, Governor.

Gov. Confound the fashion, I say; but if we must adopt the customs of other countries, why not chuse the best?—Rather than ape your *Mounseers* and *Maccaroni's*, why not follow the manners of the East, where a man may sit at his ease, in spite of the fashion?

Lord Sea. I think we seem rather too much inclined to relish the eastern luxury and effeminacy, already, Sir.

Gov. So much the better, Nephew, d'ye see; and as soon as ever I get into parliament, I will endeavour to have an act passed, that curry and pellow shall be the common food, and that there shan't be a button worn in all England.

Enter

Enter NICHOLAS.

Nich. Your Excellency's commercial agent, Mr. Samuel Bull, attends upon your leisure.

Gov. I think that is as much as to say, in plain English, that Bull the broker is below; and now I desire you to bid him walk up.

Nich. I shall observe your Excellency's behest.

[*Exit.*

Gov. Behest! now what does that word mean, my Lord? but no matter, the fellow is constantly puzzling me; from morning to night, with one *outlandish* phrase or another. But here comes my little Bull, that I can always understand; and a very understanding man he is, I can assure your Lordship.

Lord Sea. I don't in the least doubt it, Sir; and shall therefore leave you to profit by his conversation.

[*Exit.*

Gov. It is unlucky that honest Bull is not as clever at jobbing in boroughs, as he is at the same work at Jonathan's, for then I might save my money a little; but a man can't have all perfections; so I must e'en be content to purchase a seat, on the best terms I can; for what is wealth without honours, to a person of my consequence, d'ye see?

Enter BULL.

Gov. Your servant, my good friend. How go things in the Alley, to-day? and how does the fair widow, your niece, I pray?

Bull. Bad—very bad.

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Gov. Bad—very bad! What! has she got a fever?

Bull. Devilish tumble.

Gov. Not much hurt, I hope.

Bull. Lame, very lame.—All sellers—no buyers.—Twelve per cent. at least.—Bad news from Bombay.

Gov. What! is there an Indiaman arrived from thence?

Bull. Private advice.

Gov. Pshaw, pshaw, I don't mind that a dollar—private advices are generally contrived for private purposes. Tho' I was actually thinking of selling out, before you came.

Bull. Right, very right.

Gov. By your leave, Mr. Bull, I should rather think it wrong, very wrong.—What! to lose twelve per cent. man?

Bull. May repent—twenty lower, to-morrow.

Gov. Well then, I'll stay till they are got up again.—But come, tell me how does your fair niece? Not very bad, I hope.

Bull. Much afflicted—greatly grieved.

Gov. Why! what's the matter with the dear girl? Eh!

Bull. Vexatious law-suit—Comes on, to-morrow.

Gov. Well, so much the better, I think. Every one would be glad to have a law-suit over, I fancy.

Bull. Will certainly lose it. Wants money to fee lawyers.

Gov. Why now, man, you speak a little sense, and I begin to understand you.—Let's see, let's see.—Thirty gold rupees make about fifty pounds—
that

that will do the thing handsomely, I suppose.—The girl shan't lose her cause, for that article, friend Bull.

Bull. Won't do.

Gov. Not do!

Bull. Not less than five hundred, sterling.

Gov. Zounds and furies, man.—What! give five hundred pounds in a morning to lawyers? I'd see the whole Temple in a blaze, first, d'ye see.

Bull. Bid me not ask—Said, didn't love her well enough to lend it—Tho' able to pay, less than a year, out of jointure. Six hundred a-year tells well on the change, Governor.

Gov. Not love her! Why that's not the matter in hand; Mr. Bull—but five hundred is a large sum to sell out, at loss, you know as well as any man—If stock was high, now, I'd shew my affection, d'ye see. I wish this account from Bombay had not arrived—Won't the lawyers wait a few days, for their fees? Stocks ebb and flow, you know.

Bull. Lawyers wait! No delay in that branch of their practice, Governor. Must have it, this very day.

Gov. Twelve per cent. ! Didn't you say twelve per cent. ?

Bull. Twelve three eighths.

Gov. 'Twill be a great loss—a considerable loss, indeed, Mr. Bull.—But she has six hundred a-year, you say—

Bull. Six hundred, per annum.

Gov. Why that is one pretty thing, and she is another; so I give you leave to sell out the five hundred, and carry it to her directly, my honest Sam Bull—We'll meet at Garraway's, at eight.

Bull. At Garraway's.

[Exit.

Gov.

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Gov. This lie, or truth, for 'tis all one, for that, about Bombay, has been extremely unlucky, just at this time—This Bull's a devilish honest fellow, truly—I might have lost her, but for him—what a misfortune would that have been! but I think the five hundred has secured her for the present, and as soon as ever stocks get up again, I'll release a few thousands, purchase a seat in the house, build another on the banks of the Thames, marry the dear girl I doat upon, sit in my night-cap and nightgown, all day, and then a fig for their dress and their fashions, say I. [*Exit.*]

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

C A C T

A C T II.

A table with a deed, pen and ink.

The GOVERNOR, *Mr.* SQUEEZEM, *and*
NICHOLAS *discovered.*

GOVERNOR.

AND so, Mr. Squeezem, you are of opinion
that the voters of Bartertown——

Squeez. Of opinion. Nay positively certain, Sir,
—you shall hear (*reads*) “ Upon the aforesaid con-
“ ditions made, stipulated, and agreed upon by
“ and between you the aforesaid Edward Anderson,
“ Esq; and myself Bartholomew Squeezem, who
“ am the contracting party for the aforesaid free-
“ men and burgeses of the aforesaid potwalloping,
“ true, antient, and loyal corporation of Barter-
“ town, that they will return you, the aforesaid
“ Edward Anderson, to be their true and legal re-
“ presentative in parliament: provided, that you,
“ the said Edward Anderson do pay, or cause to
“ be paid, into the hands of me, the said Bartho-
“ mew Squeezem, on or before the day of election,
“ the full sum of five hundred pounds, more than
“ their former representative, Sir William Wealthy,
“ is willing to give, for the same.”

Gov. Softly, softly, good Mr. Squeezem; you
have run yourself out of breath, and taken mine
away too, with that last article. What! five hun-
dred

dred more than Sir William may be willing to give! Why, he may bid three thousand, for aught I know.

Squeez. Not unlikely, Sir, though as yet he has offered but two. But Sir William is a man of spirit: and honour, honour, Sir, cannot be bought too dear.

Gov. Let me tell you, Sir, that honours that are bought, are not very honourable.

Nich. They are doubtless of more value, when derived from personal worth——

Squeez. Which is exactly the case in point, Mr. Nicholas; for if his Excellency was not *worth* the aforesaid sum of three thousand five hundred pounds, he would not have the honour conferred upon him of representing the antient and loyal corporation of Bartertown—Ergo, it is his worth, or what he is worth, which is the same thing, that obtains him that honour.

Nich. I deny your major, and will prove your postulatam false——

Gov. Why, hey-day, do you think that I shall sit here to hear you disputing about worth and honour, and such nonsense.

Nich. Henceforth I am dumb.

Gov. So much the better. Now to the purpose, Mr. Squeezem. Suppose then that this same gentleman—Sir William Wealthy, I think you call him——

Squeez. Why that, Sir, is his real name and title. His father was Sir John Wealthy, his grandfather Sir Robert, and his great grandfather, who was the first Baronet of the family——

Gov. Why, what the plague, man, have I to do with his father or grandfather.

Squeez. Nay, Sir, if you are in a passion about the matter, there is no harm done. I don't want

to persuade you to be a member of parliament, against your inclination; though I must needs own that I know no person who would make a better figure in the house than your Excellency. Such a presence, such a sweet toned voice. I think I hear the people ask, who is that honourable gentleman who spoke last? Governor Anderson, says one. O he's a charming man, and a true patriot, says another.

Gov. Why, ay, Mr. Squeezem, if I do come into the house, I shall be a true patriot, you may rely on it—I'll get their streets paved, and their lamps lighted for them, I warrant me.

Squeez. Why so I have already told them, Sir. Governor Anderson, says I, is as rich as forty Jews, and no more values money than dirt; he'd scorn to do a mean thing, for filthy lucre, but will let his cash fly amongst ye, like dust, my boys. For you know, Sir, they always think him the best patriot that spends most money; and let little Squeezem alone for disposing of it.

Gov. That is the very thing I would be at, the laying out my money to the best advantage, and therefore, d'ye hear, I would be glad to know, supposing the worst should happen, and that Sir William should out-bid me, how much I may be likely to lose by the disappointment?

Squeez. That is a calculation intirely out of my way, Sir. But to cut the matter short, Sir, if you will please to sign this article, and give me a bill on your banker, for fifteen hundred, or a couple of thousands, I'll promise you to make it go as far as any man in England, Sir.

Gov. Why, truly, stocks are so confounded low, at present, that I can't bear the thoughts of selling
out,

out, to a disadvantage. But you may pass your word to them, Mr. Squeezem.

Squeez. Pass my word, Governor! Such coin will not pass current, in that quarter, I assure you. Sterling cash, and nothing else will do. But if it is so very inconvenient to you to raise the money, there are gentlemen enough ready to leap at the offer. There has not been so cheap a borough to be sold, these seven years, nor won't be, during this session, I'll warrant you. Why, Sir, every man of property in the kingdom wants to get into parliament, now; and you gentlemen Nabobs have raised the price of boroughs, as well as of every other commodity, throughout the nation.

Gov. Well, well, since it must be so, we'll see what's to be done. I shall meet Bull, presently, and he shall carry you a thousand. That will be two, and I won't go a shilling farther, remember, Mr. Squeezem.

Squeez. I shall do my best, Sir, but two will never do the thing handsomely, I fear.

Gov. So it be done at all, I care not a farthing for the handsomeness of the matter, d'ye see.

Squeez. I can venture to say, that neither Sir William, his father, or grandfather——

Gov. What the plague, are you going to draw down the Wealthy's upon us again—Come along, Nicholas, get me my hat, and my gold-headed bamboo, I mean the best of them.

Nich. I obey your Excellency. [Exit.

Squeez. I must set out with the sun, to-morrow morning, to fix our friends: for I hear that Sir William went down, this day, with his coach full of money; but no matter, leave it to me to out-promise all that he can perform; so that if your Excellency will be pleased but to sign this bond,
you

you shall have a good account of the borough, by the very next post.

Gov. We have no bonds in India, and a man is unworthy to live in any quarter of the globe, whose word requires a counter-security—Bull shall carry you the money to-night. *[Exit.]*

Squeez. It would be a bad thing for us practitioners in the law, if such customs were to obtain in Europe. But 'tis our certain maxim that any man's money is as good as his bond, whatever his word may be. *[Exit.]*

Second Scene changes to Mrs. FRANKLY's house.

A dressing-room and toilette.

Mrs. FRANKLY and LUCY.

Lucy. Lord, Madam, how charmingly you look to-day. Never, sure, was any thing so becoming, as your dress; and if we could but get your jewels now, out of Mr. Cheatall's hands, I think you might really pass for a queen, Madam.

Mrs. Frank. As to the jewels, Lucy, I fear I shall never see them more. However, give me the paste ear-rings, for the present; they'll pass on the Governor for his own brilliants.

Lucy. I hope they may, Madam, for as they were a love-token from his Excellency, you should not have parted with them, at least till after you were married.

Mrs. Frank. Love-token! nonsense, Lucy, for such a creature to think of love.

Lucy. And yet, Madam, if it was not for that same nonsense, you would not have had the ear-rings;

rings; and I wish Mr. Bull, and his nonsense had been far enough before he wheedled you out of them: for I tell you, again, Madam, that if the Governor should miss them, we are all blown up at once.

Mrs. Frank. I know it, Lucy; but there was no resisting Mr. Bull's importunities, unless one had a heart as hard—

Lucy. As his own, Madam. But I hope, when you are married, you'll cast him off intirely, for I am sure if you don't, his necessities will always keep you poor, and then no body else will ever be a farthing the better for you.

Mrs. Frank. Ay, Lucy, there's the rub, with you.—And so you would have me seriously think of becoming a kind and faithful spouse, and devoting my whole affections to the love of my great grandfather, for your advantage, truly.

Lucy. No, really, Madam, I am not quite so unreasonable, for I know it is as good to be out of the world, as out of the fashion, and since you must have a lover, why there's my Lord Seaton, that admires you so much, and a fine gentleman he is, and rich too, into the bargain, I'll warrant me.

Mrs. Frank. There you have touched the master string of all my misery. I love him, Lucy, and know myself unworthy of his passion.

Lucy. O, for goodness sake, dear Madam, don't sigh, and look so melancholy—you frighten me out of my wits. I shall dream of the Magdalen, as sure as a gun, to-night. You ought not to let such thoughts come into your head.

Mrs. Frank. A sincere passion makes us humble, Lucy. It is impossible that Lord Seaton should return my affection.

Lucy.

Lucy. Now I can't see that, for my life; and if you would but look in the glass there, I fancy you would soon be of another opinion yourself too. If I was but half as handsome, I know what I should think. Why there's that Miss Melville, now, that our John says is such a beauty——

Mrs. Frank. Why, indeed, I must confess that I have some personal advantages over her. But then, how many others has she above me! I almost hate her, at the thought.

[*A knocking at the door.*

Run, Lucy, see who it is. My spirits take alarm, at every motion.

Lucy. And reason enough, indeed, Madam. So many duns, and nothing to satisfy them! My patience is almost as much worn out, as theirs; and if it were not for my hopes of being well rewarded, when she's married to the Governor, I'd e'en leave her to answer them herself. (*Aside.*) [Exit.

Mrs. Frank. Into what scenes of misery has my thoughtless vanity plunged me! Could I have been but contented with the safe, though humble state of life, in which my fortune had placed me, I should not now have been the wretch I am.

Enter Lucy.

Lucy. Don't be frightened, Madam, it was no body but the postman, with a letter to Miss Melville. I left her reading it, in the parlour. She asked me if you were dressed, and I fancy she is just coming up. I wish Miss would not be so prying as to sit so much below stairs, for there can't be a hand's turn done in the house, without her knowing it.

Mrs. Frank. I wish she was fairly out of it, with all my heart. I beg, Lucy, that you will contrive
to

to keep every thing quiet, here, for a few days, lest any untoward circumstance should marr all our projects.

Lucy. Never fear, we'll manage matters, I warrant you, till you are the Governor's Lady, Madam, and then you know—— [*Exit Lucy.*]

Mrs. Frank. Yes, I know that I shall be completely wretched—To have nothing further to hope for, without enjoyment in our present possessions, is a miserable state, surely!

Enter Miss MELVILLE, with a letter.

So, my dear, you have just received a *billet-doux*, I presume.

Charl. No, really, Madam, the contents of this letter have nothing either sweet or soft, in them.—'Tis from my aunt, Lady Walton, who declines receiving me under her protection, from a ridiculous apprehension that her son, Sir William, now just coming of age, might possibly take it into his head to fall in love with his cousin.

Mrs. Frank. Why, I think that to be no unlikely surmise, Miss Melville; and I must suppose it to be with such an idea, at least, that the burying yourself alive in Northamptonshire, could ever have come into your head.

Charl. Indeed, Mrs. Frankly, you are much mistaken—I could never have thought of soliciting a favour, with an intention of repaying it with ingratitude.

Mrs. Frank. Well, then, if that was not the case, I think I have reason to congratulate you on being, as it were, compelled to follow your own inclinations, by remaining still in this dear delightful city.

D

Charl.

Charl. London, I confess to be a charming place, Maria, to those who may innocently indulge themselves in its gaieties; but a young woman without fortune or friends—

Mrs. Frank. Friends! what an antique expression! But you were ever romantic, my dear, and began, even at school, I remember, to speculate upon morals, sentiment, and such notions; but believe me, there is no such thing, on earth, as a friend, except money, child. Youth and beauty are bills of exchange, and therefore you may be a friend to yourself, if you please, my dear. (*Hums a tune.*)

Charl. This is a strange wild way of talking, Mrs. Frankly.

Mrs. Frankly. Nothing but the way of the world, and plain common sense, child. But, by-the-by, Charlotte, I think the story you told me, about your quitting your friend, as you affect to call her, has something in it bordering nearly upon absurdity. And then your concealing the names of the parties, even from me, my dear, has somewhat in it so very childish, mysterious, and pretty—

Charl. I have said too much of their respective situations ever to reveal their names. We may make confidants in our own secrets, but have no right over those of others; nor can I be said to be absurd, in sacrificing my own interest and convenience to the peace and happiness of a person, whom, notwithstanding your sad opinion of the world, I truly believe to have been my friend.

Mrs. Frank. Your conduct, I grant it, was heroic, Charlotte, and might have made a notable figure in a romance, some centuries ago; but epic virtue, my dear, is by no means the *ton* of modern times. The present world is not near so difficult as
it

it was formerly; and the utmost that is required of feeble nature, now-a-days, is barely to conceal the vices we have, under the affectation of those virtues we are deficient in.

Charl. Hypocrisy, they say, is the homage that vice pays to virtue; but I consider it rather as an aggravation of iniquity.

Mrs. Frank. Nay, prithee, Miss Melville, do not preach against prudence. It is certainly a very necessary quality, at least, and one that I would, as a friend, most seriously recommend to your own practice. But as I am really not yet old enough to set up for a Duenna, we'll change the subject, if you please—What think you of Ranelagh, to-night?

Charl. I must beg to be excused from appearing in public, Mrs. Frankly, 'till my situation and circumstances in life, shall be in some degree more ascertained.

Mrs. Frank. Why, absolutely, child, you amaze me! your fortune is small, your relations seem to have cut you off; then what measure is left you, now, but to *ascertain your situation and circumstances*, as you say, by the means of your personal advantages? Had I staid moping and moralizing in a corner, I should never have made the figure in life I do, at present.

Charl. Our spirit and talents are of quite different natures, Maria.

Mrs. Frank. I must confess, indeed, that there is something rather more striking, in my form and features, than in yours; but tastes differ, you know, my dear; and as in pictures, some like the busy, others the still life, so there may, perhaps, be certain virtuosos, who might possibly give you the preference.

D 2

Charl.

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Charl. Upon my word, Mrs. Frankly, I shall never pretend to rival you. There is but one man in the world I ever wished to please, and he is, to my misfortune, far distant, at present.

Mrs. Frank. Bravo, Miss Charlotte. And who is this dear man, I pray you?

Charl. There again you must excuse my silence, Maria. Two years of absence may have changed his sentiments; and tho' mine for him can never vary, the world is apt to think our being the first to receive and the last to retain a passion, to be a breach of that kind of prudence, you have just now recommended to me. You see I can profit by advice, Maria.

Enter a Servant.

Ser. Mr. Bull, Madam, is below, and is come to wait on you.

Mrs. Frank. Desire my uncle to walk up.

[Exit servant.]

Believe me, Miss Melville, I have not the least curiosity about your swain, unless it might be to assist you. But I have rather more business of this sort, of my own, on my hands, already, than I know well how to manage. But softly, here comes my uncle—not a word more on this subject, for the present.

Enter BULL, with a large bag of money in his hand.

Bull. I hope I am welcome. Now, my dear Maria. (*Starts at seeing Miss Melville.*) Servant, niece. (*Puts up the money.*)

Mrs. Frank. (How unguarded! *Aside.*) Miss Melville, my uncle and I have a little business,
about

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about money matters, to transact together, and I hope, therefore, that you'll excuse my requesting you to retire, a while.

Charl. I was just going to beg the favour of one of your servants to attend me, a few doors off, to inquire whether a friend of mine, Mrs. Freeman, be come to town.

Mrs. Frank. O, by all means, go and inquire after your friend. (I wish she had been gone an hour ago. *Aside.*) You'll come back to dinner, I suppose.

Charl. I shall attend you. [Exit.

Bull. (*Looking after her.*) Who is that charming girl, Maria, and how came you acquainted with her?

Mrs. Frank. We were bred at the same boarding-school together, but had not seen one another, these eight years, till about a month ago I met her, by chance, at my milleners, who happened to be her's also. She was inquiring for lodgings, for a short time that she purposed staying in London, and I foolishly invited her to my house, in hopes of an agreeable companion at home; but I find her such a canting Methodist, that I shall lay hold on the first fair pretence that offers, of ridding myself of so stupid an incumbrance.

Bull. She looks far from being stupid, Maria; and if I might advise, I would not have you let the Governor see her. I think I never saw more lively eyes, in my life.

Mrs. Frank. And they have set your heart of tinder in a blaze, I suppose.

Bull. No, Maria—tho' if you had not been by, I know not what might have been the case.

Mrs.

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Mrs. Frank. Stuff! this is nothing to the purpose, at present. But where is the money you shewed me, just now?

Bull. Here it is, a round five hundred, in cash and paper. There never was any thing so lucky as my getting it from the Governor, to fee your lawyers, Maria. Ha, ha, ha—But I hope it will keep me out of their talons, at least, for a little while longer, till something better happens.

Mrs. Frank. You astonish me, Mr. Bull! Why, you do not mean to convert it to your own use, surely.

Bull. I must confess I really do, thou most astonished fair.

Mrs. Frank. What! while my jewels lie pledged for your necessities?

Bull. And who was the cause of your getting those jewels, Mrs. Frankly? Whose credit has hitherto supported you in affluence and grandeur, Mrs. Frankly? And what has involved Samuel Bull in difficulties and ruin, but the necessities of Mrs. Frankly?

Mrs. Frank. Upbraiding cancels every obligation—I shall let the Governor know how you have behaved both to him and me.

Bull. Then you'll let him know that you are a fool, Maria, and choose to put back to sea in a storm, when you were got within sight of the port. Won't underwrite the vessel for a shilling.

Mrs. Frank. No, 'tis you that mean to destroy my hopes of fortune, and your own too, by robbing me thus.

Bull. Have a care—injure the credit of a man of business—heavy action will lie, must assure you—

Mrs. Frank. What! are you putting on your canting face, and set phrases to me? I will expose you to the world, tho' I should be ruined with you.

Bull. Weather hot,—passion dangerous,—may bring on a fever.

Mrs. Frank. Insulting monster!

Bull. No monster, Maria. Well-built, tight little man, as you'd see upon 'Change on a summer's day—Will bring the Governor, in the evening—must acknowledge the receipt of the five hundred.

Mrs. Frank. Then let me have it, to release my ear-rings—you know if he misses them, we are undone; and you can have them again, in a day or two, if your occasions should require it.

Bull. Some sense and reason in that, must confess.

Mrs. Frank. Do you think it is for the mere vanity of such toys, that I would distress you?

Bull. Here take the money then, and release your jewels—But remember, Maria, that if we still continue to act on the family compact, we may both of us thrive. But if you attempt to play me false, your own ruin must be the consequence.

(*Gives the money.*)

Mrs. Frank. Fear me not, Mr. Bull; but I cannot stay to make professions now; I am all impatience till I release the dear little sparklers. (*Goes to the side of the scene.*) Get me a chair, directly. How mean and dull these paste baubles appear, at the very idea of brilliants. (*Looking in the glass.*)

Bull. You don't seem to think them such vain toys, as you did, just now, Maria.

Mrs. Frank. Don't you know, that it is the very perfection of philosophy to seem to despise what

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what we doat on, when it is out of our reach. But to shew you that I can be indifferent, even to finery, I positively assure you that I will not wear them this whole day—there's resolution for you.

Bull. A whole day! amazing effort of philosophy, truly.

Enter a Servant.

Ser. The chair is ready, Madam.

Bull. I'll hand you into it, and direct the men.
[*Exeunt.*]

Enter Miss MELVILLE.

Char. How fortunate have I been, in meeting with Mrs. Freeman, even in the very moment when I began so severely to be sensible of my indiscretion, in having too lightly accepted of Mrs. Frankly's invitation. The freedom of those sentiments she expressed, just now, has both shocked and surprized me. My happy inexperience did not suffer me to suspect that a few years commerce with the world, could have produced so absolute a change, in a heart that formerly appeared as innocent and artless as my own. Nor could I have believed that the widow Frankly, launched into the world at large, might become a very different sort of character, from what she first appeared in, as my school-fellow and friend.

Enter VARNISH, followed by LUCY.

Varn. Don't tell me, Mrs. Lucy, I will have my money.

Lucy. For goodness sake, my dear, sweet Mr. Varnish, have patience, but for a few days longer.
I give

I give you my honour that my lady is to be married, directly, and then all her debts will be duly paid. (Miss Melville here! then we are blown, indeed. *Aside.*)

Varn. I tell you, my dear, sweet Mrs. Lucy, that I will not have patience, for an hour longer, and that I would not give a cast coach-wheel for yours, and your Lady's honour into the bargain. Married, quotha, why that may be, Mrs. Lucy; but matrimony, now-a-days, is more apt to create new debts, than to discharge old ones; and therefore, I am resolved not to stir out of this house, Mrs. Lucy, 'till I get satisfaction for my demand.

Lucy. Sure never was any thing so unlucky. (*Aside.*)

Charl. Pray, what is the matter, Mrs. Lucy?

Lucy. Why, Madam, this honest gentleman (a cheating rogue, *Aside.*) is come to demand a trifling sum——

Varn. A trifle, do you call it! Well then, pay me my good hundred and thirty pounds, and I shall thank you for the trifle, I assure you.

Lucy. Dear Mr. Varnish, what is a paltry hundred and thirty pounds, to a man of your substance, when you consider how many more hundreds you may get by my Lady? Why she must have three new carriages, at least, for herself, when she is married, besides a most superb palanquin, for his Excellency, such as your Nabobs use; and she has promised to buy me a tim-whiskey, for myself; and I have ever found her as good as her word—she is not one of your court promisers, I assure you.

Varn. I wish I could say so, with all my heart; but she has promised to pay me my *paltry sum*, as
E you

you call it, any time these six months, and her memory has failed her plaguily, Mrs. Lucy.

Lucy. Lord, man, how can a woman think of any thing when she is going to be married, but of Almack's, Cornely's, the Pantheon, or the Coterie?

Charl. I think, Mrs. Lucy, that you had better acquaint your Lady with this gentleman's impatience, at present, as I left her uncle with her, just now, and he would most probably satisfy him.

Lucy. Dear Madam, he is gone, and my Mistress out too; but if he were with her, a thousand times, I dare not do so. Mr. Bull, to be sure, is a very rich man, but a very penurious one, and might perhaps disinheret his niece, if he knew that she ventured to run a shilling in debt.

Varn. Why it is not to him she is going to be married? Eh, Lucy. He has debts enough of his own to pay, I can tell you.

Lucy. O dear, no, Mr. Varnish, she is to be married to a great rich Nabob, worth six millions, the least farthing.

Varn. (Why that's a good round sum, truly, if one could be certain of the matter—'Tis worth trying, however. *Aside.*) Eh, Mrs. Lucy, and may I depend on her dealing with me, afterwards? for I have been fobbed off, in that way, before now. When the quality get so far in our debt, that they don't choose to pay, they often quit us, and then do as much for some other of the trade.

Lucy. But my Lady has too much honour, to serve any one so, believe me.

Varn. (Not overstocked with that commodity, I dare say. *Aside.*) Well, Mrs. Lucy, to shew you, now, what a reasonable man I am, I will take your word

word for my debt, 'till your Lady is married. (And then either the Nabob's purse or person shall be my security. *Aside.*) But you are certain she will want three carriages.

Lucy. Ay, as sure as there is truth in my words, Mr. Varnish.

Varn. Well then, good Mrs. Lucy, we will not disturb this gentlewoman, any further. Your servant, Madam.

Lucy. Let me wait on you down stairs, good Mr. Varnish.

Varn. You'd have the whisky green, I suppose.

Lucy. A bright pea-green, certainly.

[*Exeunt Varnish and Lucy.*]

Charl. I am alarmed, even to terror, at my situation here. Every thing I see or hear, confirms my apprehensions and suspicions, with regard to Mrs. Frankly's conduct. It seems an age till I quit her house.—Under the protection of my dear Mrs. Freeman, how safe and happy shall I feel myself! The consciousness of one's own virtue becomes doubly pleasing, from the concurring testimony of an amiable and worthy friend.

Enter Lucy.

Lucy. Lord, Madam, I beg your pardon, but that vile blundering coach-maker man has put it quite out of my head to tell you, that just as you came into the door, a servant in livery followed you, and asked our John if you lived here; and the fool only answered simply, yes, without inquiring his business, or calling me to sift him. But if he should come again, I shall be able to give a good account of his errand, I warrant me.

E 2

Charl.

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Charl. I am obliged to you, Mrs. Lucy, but would not have you give yourself the least trouble in the matter, as I shall quit this house in the evening, and know no person who can have any manner of business to enquire after me.

Lucy. Dear, Madam, why my Lady will be so lonesome without you.

Charl. I fancy not, Mrs. Lucy. But pray is she visible at present? for I am impatient to acquaint her with my good fortune in meeting with the friend I went in quest of.

Lucy. I am sure she will rejoice at it. But pray, Madam, where does your friend live? I should be glad to know, in case the servant should call again with a letter to you. I'll lay my life on't you have made some new conquest, Madam, tho' the fellow was cunning enough to pretend that he belonged to some Lady, when he asked the question.

Charl. 'Tis never worth a woman's while, Lucy, to trouble herself about any chance admirer—if he be really one, he will soon find out some method or other of declaring himself so. Too much anxiety about such matters always renders us contemptible.

Lucy. I find, Madam, that you don't chuse to trust me with your secrets.

Charl. Indeed, Lucy, I have none. Innocence disdains mystery. Nor is there a single action of my life, that I need wish to be concealed.

Lucy. That's an extraordinary declaration, truly, in these days, for a young Lady turned of eighteen. And now, if you please, Madam, I'll see if my Lady be come in, and let her know that you desire to speak with her.

Charl. I shall be obliged to you. [*Exit Lucy.*
Unhappy Maria! how sincerely do I pity her situation!

situation! yet let me hope that indiscretions rather than vice, have missed her steps from the sole paths of happiness and peace. But do they not, alas! in our sex, almost equally involve their wretched victims in misery, and lead them on to ruin! Were it possible for me to awaken her to a sense of her danger, I should then have most amply repaid her civilities to me, by an act of the most real kindness and friendship. *[Exit,*

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT

A C T III.

S C E N E, Lord SEATON's house.

Lord SEATON and Colonel RAMSAY at table, with bottles, glasses, &c.

COLONEL.

YOU must excuse me, my Lord. I don't choose to drink any more. (*Rising*).

Lord Sea. Why thou art such a sober fellow, Charles, that if I did not know you well, I should imagine you had a design upon some rich Dowager, and were to pass your evening at picquet with her. (*Rises*).

Col. Why even that, my Lord, though by no means my choice, I should prefer to the unmanly practice of stupefying my senses and inflaming my blood with wine.

Lord Sea. You'll certainly be a vast favourite with the Ladies, Colonel.

Col. Then I shall as certainly think myself a very happy man, my Lord; for I look upon the company of agreeable women to be the most charming society in the world.

Lord Sea. 'Ware poaching, Charles, keep out of my purlicus, and the rest of the field lies open before you.

Enter WATERS, with a Card to the COLONEL.

Wat. From my Lady, Sir.

Lord

Lord Sea. I think I spoke just in time, Colonel. What answer from Mrs. Frankly, Waters?

Wat. Her compliments, and she will be glad to see your Lordship this evening.

Lord Sea. Order the coach in half an hour.

Col. My respects to her Ladyship, and I shall obey her commands. *[Exit Waters.]*

Lord Sea. And pray, Colonel, if it be no mystery, what are her Ladyship's commands?

Col. As she has not restrained me from communicating them, you shall be informed, my Lord.

[Gives him the card.]

Lord Sea. "Lady Seaton's compliments to Colonel Ramsay, and desires the honour of his company to supper, this evening, on a very particular occasion." What can this particular invitation mean? There seems to be something odd in this business, Colonel. Perhaps her Ladyship designs to raise my jealousy. I have heard of such arts put in practice upon lukewarm husbands, heretofore.

Col. She has gone one step towards it, my Lord, at least, by raising your curiosity. But where our affections are not much interested, I should think it unnatural for any such passion to be moved.

Lord Sea. You'll pardon me, Colonel, for though I am not romantically in love with my wife, I could perhaps be as outrageously jealous of her honour, on the least alarm, as the most amorous coxcomb breathing. But to do her justice, her conduct through life has been so irreproachable, that I dare say her sense and virtue will never suffer her to render me uneasy; that way, at least.

Col. I should be better pleased at hearing you make your wife's encomium, if it did not so strongly reflect

reflect upon yourself, my Lord. How is it possible that you can allow her those merits which are to be the basis of your security and peace, and yet withhold from her the just reward of them, your tenderness and esteem?

Lord Sea. Do not press me upon this subject, Ramsay, for even to you I cannot unfold the secret of my heart; but will so far confess to you that I have acted, and still continue to do so, against the fullest conviction both of my honour and reason. But perhaps if I could happen to discover a few failings in my wife's character, her presence would be less uneasy to me; for, in short, Charles, we cannot love any one cordially, who constantly reproaches us, though ever so silently.

Col. What a perverse fate is Lady Seaton doomed to, whose very merits are imputed to her as faults! but I hope, for your own sake, as well as hers, that this delirium will soon have an end; for no rational person can ever taste of happiness, who is conscious of pursuing it by improper means.

Lord Sea. Though I feel the full force of your argument, Charles, you must permit me to tell you——

Col. What I know already, my Lord, that passion is often too strong for reason; and while Mrs. Frankly's charms retain their dominion over your heart, you will continue still blind and insensible to those of Lady Seaton.

Lord Sea. You are mistaken, Colonel, my heart is no way concerned, in my attachment to Mrs. Frankly—for though she is handsome, lively, and, as far as I can judge, has nothing of the prude about her, she can only amuse, but not infatuate; and 'tis merely in hopes of triumphing over a more serious passion, that I sometimes trifle away an hour or two with her.

Col.

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Col. This is an extraordinary declaration, indeed, my Lord, and leaves me still more at a loss for the clue to your labyrinth.

Enter WATERS.

Wat. The coach is ready, my Lord.

Lord Sea. Get me my hat and sword.

[Exit Waters.]

Will you accompany me, Colonel, or shall I set you down any where else?

Col. No, my Lord. I shall return to my search after Miss Melville, and shall then do myself the honour to obey Lady Seaton's summons to supper. I hope we shall meet then.

Lord Sea. I know not whether I should obtrude on your *tête à tête*, or shall have resolution enough to quit mine, with my little widow, so soon. But success attend your pursuit.

Col. *Au revoir.*

[Exit.]

Lord Sea. I most sincerely wish that he may be able to discover Miss Melville's retreat, which I have so much in vain attempted. But then should she reveal the cause of her quitting this house, will not Ramsay think I have acted unworthily? But of what consequence are his thoughts, to the secret upbraidings of my own! Could I but recal a few short weeks, I should be happy, because I should be blameless. But that indissoluble knot, which has rendered an amiable woman as wretched as myself, can never be untied. Then hang reflection, success to dissipation, and now for a little flirt with my lively widow, for the rest of the evening. *[Exit.]*

F

SCENE,

SCENE, Mrs. FRANKLY's house.

Enter Mrs. FRANKLY and Miss MELVILLE.

You are upon the wing, I find, Miss Melville ; I shall be vastly dull without you. But before you set out, pray let me a little into your present scheme ; and first tell me about what age may your friend Mrs. Freeman be ? Immensely rich, extremely old, I suppose, and you mean kindly to assist in making her will.

Char. How wildly you talk, Maria. Mrs. Freeman is in the prime of life, and likely, I hope, to live long. She has been a widow about five years, and though universally admired, has chosen to pass the greatest part of that time, at her seat in Somersetshire, amidst her own and her late husband's friends and neighbours. There I first had the happiness of her acquaintance, and there is she idolized for her goodness.

Mrs. Frank. And so your hopeful scheme is to be as good as she, till you both fall into a lethargy together. Do you know, Charlotte, that there is nothing on earth so tiresome, as your good sort of people. They constantly set me a yawning, and will at any time serve to procure me as sound a slumber, as a dose of opium.

Char. They have a very different effect on me, Mrs. Frankly ; they rather rouse my slumbering virtue. Emulation is the strongest incentive to——

Mrs. Frank. O pray, Miss Melville, keep all this canting stuff for your good Mrs. Freeman, and do not stupify my senses with any more of your homilies—I am in an agony till she is out of the house.

[*Aside.*
Char.

Char. I shall not trespass on your patience much longer, Madam—Mrs. Freeman said she would send her chariot for me at six o'clock, and I believe it is now near that hour.

Mrs. Frank. (*Looking at her watch*). Six! yes, really, Madam, 'tis extremely six.

Char. I think I hear the chariot stop; and now give me leave to assure you, Madam, that I shall ever think myself much obliged to you for your kindness and hospitality.

Mrs. Frank. Nay, prithee, my dear, spare your acknowledgments; I most heartily wish you a good evening, and a world of happiness, with your good Mrs. Freeman.

Enter Lord SEATON.

Lord Sea. My dear Mrs. Frankly!— (*On seeing Miss Melville*.) Miss Melville here! O, Madam, what an happiness is mine to have met with you.

Mrs. Frank. Why this is vastly pretty, sure! What can it mean?

Lord Sea. Nay, do not turn from me, Miss Melville; for be assured that I have suffered more, on your account, than words can express, and that my utmost purpose will be accomplished, in restoring you to the society of your friends again.

Char. It is impossible, my Lord.

Mrs. Frank. This is rather too much, Miss Melville; you should have made your appointments at your good Mrs. Freeman's, and not under my roof, Madam.

Lord Sea. Let me implore you on my knees to hear me—for Lady Seaton's, for Ramsay's sake.

Char. Pray rise, my Lord—Colonel Ramsay did you say? Is he in England then?

F 2

Enter

Enter Lady SEATON.

Lady Sea. Where is my friend, my dearest Charlotte? (*Sees Lord Seaton at her feet.*) Can I believe my fight! (*Starts.*) It is, it is too true! (*Sinks into a chair.*)

Char. My dearest Lady Seaton, hear me.

Lady Sea. No, Miss Melville—No, you cannot clear yourself, nor should I wish to hear you criminate my Lord.

Lord Sea. I am astonished—What can have brought her hither! (*Aside.*) I shall not bend to your tribunal, Madam—You are my wife, but not my judge; and I must tell you, Madam, that I shall not easily pardon your acting in a manner so unbecoming, either of your own character, or my rank in life.

Char. Let me turn suppliant now to you, my Lord—Do not distress my best, my dearest friend. Indeed, Lady Seaton, I am perfectly innocent, notwithstanding these unlucky appearances.

Mrs. Frank. O yes, a mighty innocent creature, truly, to make your assignations here with a married man, and bring a scandal on my house. Little did I think I had harboured such a serpent in my bosom. I am sure her Ladyship is much to be pitied, between ye; and to let her see that I have no improper connections with such persons, I desire, my pretty innocent Miss, that you will leave my house, directly.

Char. You need not fear any further intrusion from me, Madam. Suffer me but to speak a few words to Lady Seaton.

Lord Sea. These are your doings, Madam. (*To Lady Seaton.*)

Char.

Char. Would I had died before I became the unhappy cause of this dissension. But be assured, my dearest Lady Seaton, however this incident may have raised your suspicions, a time will shortly come, when you shall be convinced that I, as well as you, have been grossly injured. *[Exit.]*

Mrs. Frank. O yes, vastly injured, I dare say—in being interrupted—I think you had better go after your friend, my Lord, and see her safe to her new lodgings, that you may not be at a loss to find her again. Base, inconstant man! *(Aside.)*

Lord Sea. I shall not incumber your apartment longer, Madam, than just to see that Lady out of it; for as she bears my name, I do not chuse to have it joined with yours.

Mrs. Frank. Insolent, to a degree beyond bearing. *(Aside.)*

Lady Sea. I am extremely sorry, Madam, for the confusion I have occasioned in your house; but be assured, that I did not expect to have met with such a scene, when I entered it. I have been much deceived.

Mrs. Frank. Yes, indeed, Madam, Miss Melville has deceived you most extremely.

Lady Sea. I fear she has unhappily deceived herself, even more than me—But I shall not trespass longer on your time and patience, Madam, and again beg your excuse for my intrusion—I am ready, my Lord, to attend you. *(To Lord Seaton.)*

[Exit.]

Lord Sea. I follow you, Madam.

(As he is going, Mrs. Frankly opposes him.)

Mrs. Frankly. Pray, my Lord, let me speak a word to you.

Lord Sea. You must pardon me, Madam, if after what has happened just now, I should wish to shorten our conversation as much as possible.

Mrs.

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Mrs. Frank. Nay, then, I am convinced that what I said, in order to remove Lady Seaton's suspicions of myself, and turn them on Miss Melville, was but too true. Cruel, ungrateful man! But yet you shall not go.

Lord Sea. By your leave, Madam, this is no time for trifling. (*Breaks from her.*)

Enter the GOVERNOR.

Gov. Hey dey! What have we here! Lord Seaton running away from a fair lady, and she laying violent hands on his garments.

Mrs. Frank. O Sir, I am glad you are come to my assistance, that you may help me to detain this infatuated man, for his wife's sake, from flying after a vile creature that he followed here just now. I am sure I would not, for a thousand guineas, that it happened in my house; and I pity his poor Lady, of all things.

Lord Sea. This is a master stroke, indeed, Mrs. Frankly. (*Aside.*)

Gov. Why really, if this be the case, I do think his poor Lady is to be pitied—Why, man, the honey-moon is hardly over yet, and I declare that I was constant to my wife, for near a year after we were married—But then I was in love, mightily in love, d'ye see—However, I don't think that either you or I have any right to interfere in his Lordship's amours, Mrs. Frankly, and a forcible detainer is contrary to law—Besides, I have a small matter of business to confer with you upon myself, at present.

Lord Sea. Which I will by no means interrupt, Governor, and heartily wish you may settle it to your mutual satisfaction: [*Exit.*]

Gov. I shall be home to supper, my Lord. I have

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have bespoke a couple of little plates to be dressed after our India fashion. My Lady has ordered the rest, I suppose. I make bold to hope, my dear little widow, that you understand something of cookery—for they absolutely know nothing of seasoning their meat, in England. I have some excellent receipts of poor Bab's by me.

Mrs. Frank. How could I be so weak a wretch, as to imagine I could retain Lord Seaton's affections. He is, alas! gone from me for ever. (*Aside.*)

Gov. You seem mightily disturbed, I think—I wonder she does not say any thing of the five hundred pounds. (*Aside.*) No bad news, I hope, from your lawyers.

Enter BULL.

Mrs. Frank. Here comes another of my plagues. (*Aside.*)

Gov. Your servant, Mr. Bull. Now, my little widow, speak to Sammy, there—he'll make your mind easy, I believe. He is certain of your success, and tells me that the suit will be determined, to-morrow.

Bull. Trial put off, till next term.

Gov. Never the worse for that, Master Bull. Stocks may rise, by that time, perhaps. You did not sell out——

Bull. Before dinner.

Gov. How unlucky! But, however, it don't much signify, as it happens, as I shall want that, and another five hundred, for Squeezem, this very night.

Bull. Money disposed of to lawyers. Did not know of the delay, till it was expended. Won't refund. Must be *refreshed* again, first day of term.

Gov.

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Gov. Refreshed! I actually believe you invent words only to put me in a passion. This refreshment has almost thrown me into a fever.

Bull. Don't be obstinate—speak to him, or we shall be undone, Maria. (*Aside to Mrs. Frankly.*)

Mrs. Frank. No matter—I care not what becomes of you, myself, or all the world.

Gov. Nay, prithee, don't take on so, neither—Though delays are dangerous, to be sure, as well as mortifying.

Bull. Wants comfort, mightily.

Gov. And she shall have it, Sammy, eh! But, let's see—Why the term don't sit till November next—That's a plaguy long day, to be sure—I thought to have been married directly—and if one was certain that this same law suit, d'ye see, was quite a hollow thing—

Bull. Quite hollow.

Gov. Say you so? Why then, if my pretty widow pleases, we'll be married to-morrow, and dine at the London Tavern, or the Crown and Anchor, or wherever else she pleases—You shall have your choice, d'ye see—

Mrs. Frank. All places upon earth are equal now to me—for none can quiet my distracted mind.
(*Half aside.*)

Gov. (*To Bull.*) Why I don't rightly understand that, now—Didn't she whisper something about distractions? eh! There's no madness in the family, I hope.

Bull. Madness! No, no, no—Distracted with joy, on her wedding-day, that's all—Pretty compliment, if rightly taken—Has wit at her fingers end—Recover yourself, or we are ruined.

(*Aside to Mrs. Frankly.*)

Gov. Why that is witty, to be sure, but it did
not

not strike me, I own, at first. (*To Mrs. Frankly.*) Well, but compose yourself, d'ye see, for too much joy may sometimes be hurtful.

Mrs. Frank. Mine will not be immoderate, Sir, I promise you.

Gov. That's very discreetly said, now. I am impatient for to-morrow. I'll go directly to bespeak the dinner, and get the licence ready. Come, Mr. Bull, you shall go with me. But won't your niece give me one kiss?—

Bull. May command it.

Gov. D'ye tell me so; by your leave then. (*Kisses her.*) Her breath smells like Otto of roses. By the way you shall have a bottle of the best that ever was made in Persia, to-morrow morning. The Great Mogul has not as good. But, come along, Master Bull, I have many matters, and money matters, to talk to you about; but those little twinklers put every thing out of my head. I shall want a thousand pounds for the good of the nation, this very night, d'ye see. I have promised to send it to Squeezem, and Ned Anderson never yet broke his word; and that's a bold expression for one of my age, let me tell you. I am not a man of words, but of deeds, my little widow, and I hope you'll like me the better, therefore—eh! and so adieu, My pretty, pretty Poll. (*Singing.*)

[*Exeunt Governor and Bull.*]

Mrs. Frank. I am glad they are gone—I could not conquer my confusion! Detested be the hour I tried the art to wear a smile upon my cheek, while rage and grief tear my distracted soul.

G

Enter

Enter Lucy.

Lucy. Lord, Madam! what a sad bustle has been here this afternoon; I am afraid we are all blown up with the Governor, as I hear he was by at some part of it!

Mrs. Frank. Lucy, I am undone for ever! I have lost Lord Seaton's heart, and all other misery is equal to me.

Lucy. I wish you had no other misfortune to complain of, Madam. Hearts are soon won, and soon lost. It is not love, but money, that should take up your thoughts at present. In short, all your creditors are alarmed, and you had much better think of the only way you have to quiet them, by becoming the Governor's lawful wife immediately.

Mrs. Frank. I do not want your advice, but your pity, Lucy.

Lucy. Pity! Charity begins at home, Madam; and for that matter, I think myself as much to be pitied as other people.

Mrs. Frank. (*Pausing.*) Get me a pen and ink; I'll write to Lord Seaton directly.

Lucy. If you have lost his heart, a pen and ink will hardly bring it back again; but they are on your table in the dressing room; and if I might advise, it would be, for the present, at least, to drop a connection, which, by ruining you, may injure my own interests. (*Carelessly.*)

Mrs. Frank. And pray, Mrs. Lucy, how came your interests to be any way connected in this matter?

Lucy. Why really, Madam, to tell you the truth, I apprehend, that if any unlucky circumstance

stance should break off your match with the Governor, it would then be out of your power to reward my many long and faithful services.

Mrs. Frank. Insolent wretch! needed there this addition to my misfortunes!

Lucy. People who bring on their own misfortunes, Madam——

Mrs. Frank. Are to be insulted by their servants, it seems——But I will no longer bear your insolence.

Lucy. Nor I your distresses, Madam.

Mrs. Frank. My affability has been mistaken, I find, or you had not dared to insult me thus——But as for the extraordinary merits you boast of, I shall think it not the least injustice to leave such virtues to their own reward. Prepare your accounts instantly, nor dare appear before me again, but to give them in. Ungrateful woman! [Exit.

Lucy. *Prepare your accounts.* Yes, that's easily done. I have them pretty well by heart already. I'll give them in, to-morrow morning, to the Governor, and leave you two to cast them up together, at your next meeting. *Ungrateful woman*, too, I am called. 'Tis fine talking, truly, about gratitude, and such stuff, because one won't spend their whole life in poverty with her—and that I foresee will be her fate, at last. In love with my Lord, forsooth! and every thing must be sacrificed to that girlish passion. Why, if the Governor should marry her to-morrow, 'tis ten to one but she'd be in the height of the mode in a week; in Doctor's Commons in a fortnight; and a beggar before the honey-moon was over. But I'll prevent that mischief, at least, by exposing her to his Excellency; and if he is bent upon matrimony, right or wrong,

G 2 there

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there are people who think me handsomer than my mistress; and if he has but half as much sense, as money, he may possibly be of the same opinion too. *[Exit.]*

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT

A C T IV.

S C E N E, Lord SEATON's house.

Enter Colonel RAMSAY.

COLONEL,

MY search has hitherto been vain; but I have just now heard that my sister Freeman is expected soon in town; and if female friendships are not, as Lord Seaton says, an empty name, she will probably know something of my dear Charlotte's situation or abode. My engagement here, for this evening, puts it out of my power to enquire about her, to-night; but to-morrow early I shall call at her house—Mrs. Markam!

Enter Mrs. MARKAM.

Mark. You are welcome to England, Sir, but am sorry to acquaint you that my Lady happens to be so much indisposed, at present, that she must deny herself the pleasure of seeing you, for this evening.

Col. I am extremely sorry for your Lady's illness, Mrs. Markam. This sudden attack alarms me for her.

Mark. O, by no means sudden, Sir. My Lady has been ill of the same disorder, ever since she has been married. I wonder, for my part, how she has been able to bear it so patiently; but she is convinced, at last, and I hope she'll pluck up a spirit

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spirit now, and not suffer herself to be imposed upon, any longer.

Col. I do not understand you. She seemed to be in perfect health, at dinner.

Mark. Well, Sir, and if she was, she has had enough in conscience to have made her sick, since then. She'll believe me, another time, I fancy. I am not apt to be mistaken, whatever she may be. I am sure it is a scandalous thing for him that has such a charming Lady of his own, and has not been married quite two months yet—And that pretty demure Miss too, that my Lady was so fond of—But I never liked her, for my part, and always said that smooth water——

Col. Prithee, Mrs. Markam, explain yourself—You alarm me, extremely.

Mark. I beg your honour's pardon—I forgot that you were in love with Miss Melville formerly, or to be sure I would not have said a word against her before you; but then I was so enraged with my Lord for slighting his good Lady, that I could not command myself—Though for certain it is no affair of mine, after all; and I must beg, Sir, that you would not mention any thing I have said, for the world; for my Lady would never forgive me, if she knew that I spoke of it to any one.

Col. I am on the rack. (*Aside.*) The only way then to insure my secrecy, Mrs. Markam, is by making me a thorough confidant; for as yet I do not comprehend what Miss Melville has to do with either your Lady's illness, or your Lord's unkindness. She quitted this house, I have been informed, before they were married; and they have both assured me they have neither of them seen her, since.

Mark. Does my Lord say so?

Col.

Col. He most certainly did.

Mark. Why then great folks have a patent—I suppose; for as sure as I stand here, my Lady detected his Lordship and Miss Melville together, this very afternoon—And was that their first tête à tête, think you?

Col. By heaven, I cannot give credit to this story—I should still think it impossible, though Lord Seaton and Miss Melville themselves were both to confess it.

Mark. O Lord, Sir, I am frightened out of my wits—It mayn't be true, as you say, after all. I could bite my tongue off for being so nimble. I wish heartily I had been dumb.

Col. If you have idly slandered Miss Melville, you deserve to be so for life. But I will have this matter explained immediately—Where is Lord Seaton?

Mark. O dear, good Colonel, for heaven's sake don't be in a passion—there might be no harm done, to be sure—he was only kneeling at her feet, when my Lady happened to come into the room.

Col. Infidious, base dissembler!

Mark. Why to be sure he has a dissembling tongue, and every one thought that he was in love with my Lady, before he married her, except herself.—But she, it seems, had her suspicions that he liked Miss better, and that made my Lady so cold to her, that she hardly opened her lips to her for a great while before she left the house. (*A rapping at the door.*) Here's my Lord a coming, I fear.

Col. I hope so.

Mark. O dear, merciful Colonel, have compassion, and don't betray me now. Consider I am but a poor servant, Sir, and indeed Miss Melville was always very kind to me; and if your honour will

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will but forgive me, this once, I promise never to speak another word against her, while I have breath—But I must run, Sir. [Exit.

Col. And well you have rewarded her kindness. But when persons of rank and education set an example of meanness and ingratitude, we are not to expect to meet with their opposite virtues, in an inferior class.

Enter Lord SEATON.

Lord Sea. O Charles, I am glad to meet you. I have a perfect novel of extraordinary incidents to communicate to you.

Col. And I am glad, my Lord, that we are met, and that you are in such a communicative disposition, as I have a question to ask you, that must be answered.

Lord Sea. Must, Colonel!

Col. Yes, my Lord, it must be resolved—Where is Miss Melville?

Lord Sea. That question, Colonel, neither must, nor can, be resolved, by me—I know not where she is.

Col. Can it be possible you should be mean enough to attempt to screen an act of perfidy and baseness, beneath the flimsy subterfuge of falsehood! But 'twill not do, my Lord; we must not part, till you inform me where Miss Melville is; and from her lips, which used to be the oracles of truth, I will learn all the rest.

Lord Sea. You really astonish me, Sir, with a language as little becoming you to use, as for me to bear.

Col. The man who has deserved such language ought to bear it. Courage and falsehood never dwelt

dwelt together ; and when the mind is so far debased, as to forge a tale to impose upon a friend, all pretence to bravery is but a jest—a madman's phrenzy, or a coward's rage.

Lord Sea. I can endure this insolence, no longer. This roof is your protection, for the present, Sir ; but quit it instantly, and let us quickly meet where the vile term you have now used, may light on him who most deserves it.

Col. Unworthy as I think your Lordship's conduct, I cannot yet refuse your appointment—Tomorrow morning I shall call upon you—till then, farewell, my Lord. [Exit.]

Lord Sea. You shall find me ready, Sir. How was it possible for him to know that I had seen Miss Melville ? When I came in the servant told me my wife was ill, and had not seen the Colonel—She could not, therefore, nay, she would not, tell him—But it matters not, at present, who informed him. I never meant to injure him. I did not know of his passion for Charlotte, till after I was married ; and had I, on his return, acknowledged each circumstance that ever passed between us, he could not have condemned me. How weak and culpable is want of frankness ? This alone has involved me in all my difficulties.

Enter WATERS with a letter.

Wat. From Mrs. Frankly, my Lord. [Exit.]

Lord Sea. (*Reads.*) “ Notwithstanding inhumanity, unkind treatment of me—fondness tri-
“ umphed—still weak enough—Possibly hazard—
“ breaking off—advantageous match—A man I
“ detest—But what is worldly interest, &c.

“ Mary Frankly.”

H

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Despicable, yet unhappy woman ! The artful meanness of her conduct, this evening, has sunk her below my pity. This marriage that she hints at, is thrown out merely to draw me to her lure—But 'tis in vain, for I shall never see, or think of her, again. Indeed I have something more material to take up my thoughts, at present—This hasty conduct of Ramsay's distresses me extremely—But 'tis first necessary that I should clear Miss Melville's conduct to my wife—They must be mutual sufferers by the continuance of Lady Seaton's mistake ; and she, at least, deserves all my endeavours to restore her peace. Though I cannot account for her following me to Mrs. Frankly's this evening. But grant it were a fault, 'tis her first to me, and mine I confess to have been manifold against her—Who's there ?

Enter WATERS.

Ask Markam if her Lady be in her dressing-room, and let her know that I desire to speak with her. [*Exit Waters.*] In what different points of view do the same objects present themselves, at different times, before us ! The seriousness of my present situation has removed the veil which the false notions and loose manners of the present world had spread over my thoughts and actions. I see now the impropriety, nay, the inhumanity, of my whole conduct to Lady Seaton, and wish, though perhaps too late, that it may yet be in my power to make her every atonement.

Enter Lady SEATON in confusion.

You seem alarmed, Madam ; but lay aside your fears—You have nothing to apprehend.

Lady

Lady Sea. The consciousness, my Lord, of having offended you, though most inadvertently, must certainly render me unhappy.

Lord Sea. The extraordinary step you took this evening, Madam, appears to be but little consistent with the delicacy of the sentiment you now express.

Lady Sea. If you will condescend to hear my motives for it, my Lord, you will not judge so hardly of me. I then thought Miss Melville innocent——

Lord Sea. And so, by heaven, she is.

Lady Sea. My Lord!

Lord Sea. Yes, Madam, I repeat it; and though to support my assertion, I shall be obliged to accuse myself, yet will I do her merit the justice it deserves. On my return from Italy, at the same moment I beheld ye both——

Lady Sea. Stop there, my Lord—too well, alas! I know who then won the preference in your affections.

Lord Sea. Passion is involuntary, Madam; but I had hopes that reason, which directed my addresses to you, would have conquered that partiality.

Lady Sea. Impossible, my Lord, I fear; and blushing own, that though I perceived your attachment to my rival, I yet nourished in my breast the same to you—By vain self-love misled, I fondly thought I might perhaps inspire the tenderness I felt—My weakness has been punished as it ought!

Lord Sea. You judge yourself too severely, Madam—'Tis I alone am culpable.

Lady Sea. We both deceived ourselves, my Lord, and both have been to blame.

Lord Sea. I would not wish, Madam, to involve you in my errors, and am sincerely sorry you should have suffered by them—Let me now proceed——

After some unsuccessful struggles with myself, I at length determined to confess my prepossession for Miss Melville, and break off the treaty with you—I wrote to her, accordingly, on the subject—Her answer was consistent with that worth which dignifies her whole conduct. She owned ingenuously that her heart had been preingaged, but also generously assured me, that were it perfectly free, she could never have availed herself of my preference in her favour, to your prejudice.

Lady Sea. Generous, charming girl! how have I injured her!

Lord Sea. I have reason to believe that she left this house, in hopes her absence might efface my passion, and suffer your beauty and merits, Madam, to produce the effect they must naturally have had upon a disengaged heart. From that moment, till this evening, and that by accident merely, I declare I never saw or heard from her; and was, at that instant, only entreating her return to you again. If therefore you have conceived one doubt to her dishonour, banish it for ever from your mind.

Lady Sea. I never had a doubt, my Lord, of Charlotte's worth, nor was it jealousy, but friendship, that brought me to be a witness of that scene which first disturbed my confidence in her—But you have now restored it, and if I knew where to direct my course, I would this moment fly to intreat her pardon, as I do yours; for I have injured you beyond the hope of an atonement—'Twas selfish vanity inspired the cruel wish of being yours, without the power of paying back the happiness I received.

Lord Sea. Nay, Madam, do not speak so humbly—The polite attentions which I paid you, joined to your own personal charms and merits, might, without

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without vanity, have made you think that you possessed my love ; whilst I, false to your happiness, as well as to my own, knew but too well I had not then a heart to give.

Lady Sea. In vain, my Lord, you kindly strive to set my mind at peace, and reconcile me to an error that has been fatal to us both, I fear.

Lord Sea. I am too sensible how far I have wronged you, to bear this generous contest ; but may I hope the frankness I have shewn, in thus discovering to you the weakness of my conduct, will at least assure you of my confidence and esteem.

Lady Sea. I ask no more, my Lord, and shall ever study to deserve them.

Lord Sea. The kindness and condescension of that speech, Lady Seaton, merits much more, and has awaked my tenderness—But is that worthy your acceptance, now ?

Lady Sea. The world were well exchanged for such a treasure !

Lord Sea. Accept then, thou most deserving of thy sex, a heart more surely thine, than if it had first been led to you by passion only, for that is liable to change ; but kindness and worth, like yours, must naturally inspire unfading love.

Lady Sea. My tears alone can speak my joy ! my gratitude !

Lord Sea. Thus let me wipe away the precious drops, and with them all remembrance of my past follies. (*Embraces her.*)

Enter the GOVERNOR.

Gov. Why, hey dey, what wind blows now ! but no matter, this at least is as it should be, and just

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just so I hope little spouſey and I will ſpend our time together. I have a buſineſs of conſequence to communicate to your Lordſhip—I do all above board, d'ye ſee, and as I thought you were dull and alone, I came up to diſcourſe you a little—I am glad to ſee you recovered, niece, they told me you were ſick, and kept your chamber.

Lady Sea. I am much better, Sir, and now may truly ſay that I am well and happy.

Gov. And I am truly glad of both, my dear niece.

Lord Sea. (*To Lady Seaton.*) Can it be poſſible; my dear, that, generous as your nature is, a woman can ſincerely pardon a preference once ſhewn to another?

Lady Sea. The doubt's unkind—but aſk yourſelf, my Lord, Can there be any thing in nature more pleaſing to a generous mind, than to have ſomething to forgive?

Gov. Why this is downright making love, my Lord, and renders me the more impatient to talk of my own affairs, d'ye ſee.

Lord Sea. Retire, my dear, and reſt aſſured that all my future life ſhall be devoted to the continuance of our preſent happineſs.

Lady Sea. Your kind intentions have ſecured its permanence, and made my bliſs complete. [*Exit.*]

Lord Sea. (*Lord Seaton looking after her.*) How little do we foreſee the evils that await us! the apprehenſions of what that amiable woman may have yet to ſuffer, on my account, diſturb me much.

Gov. Why for that matter, my Lord, I am a little diſturbed myſelf, d'ye ſee, or elſe I would not have troubled you—You muſt know then, that I am going to be married out of hand, directly, and my

my friend Bull, who was to have given away the bride, writes me word that he can't attend my wedding—but if your Lordship will be so good to supply his place, d'ye see——

Lord Sea. I heartily wish you joy, Governor, and will readily accept the office; but pray who is our aunt to be?

Gov. One that you have seen, very lately, my Lord, but you don't know half her good qualities, perhaps; she is the modestest, most reserved little rogue—and a man, at my time of life, you know, and in these times too, has no business with a fine gay flaunting Lady, d'ye see.

Lord Sea. Not much, truly, Sir.

Gov. No, no, Ned Anderson is no such simpleton! I have chosen a sober, discreet, young creature, very handsome withal—that will mind family matters, and be proud of her husband's company, d'ye see——Can't you guess, now, my Lord? there are but few, in these days, that can answer such a description, I fancy——

Lord Sea. Very few, I believe, Governor, and I happen to be wholly unacquainted with any of that small number.

Gov. Why then not to puzzle you farther, my Lord, the first letter of her name is Frankly——

Lord Sea. Frankly!

Gov. Why yes, my Lord, the pretty widow, at whose house we happened to meet, this evening—she was mightily concerned for my niece, I assure you; for she is very strict, and was greatly out of sorts at your behaviour. And by the way you ought to be a little more cautious in your conduct, and not expose yourself, by pursuing a girl into a strange house, d'ye see——

Lord

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Lord Sea. I am much obliged to you for your advice, Sir. But pray will you give me leave to ask you by what means you became acquainted with this same paragon of virtue?

Gov. Why my good friend, honest Sam. Bull, the broker, having in the course of our business together, conceived a particular regard for me, introduced me to his niece, some time ago—she has a jointure of six hundred *per annum*, and he was plaguily afraid that some young fop might run away with her, and use her ill; he therefore recommended me as one that would be a kind of a father to her, d'ye see——

Lord Sea. Yes, that I do see, very plainly, indeed—But pray is your good friend Mr. Bull a broker for marriages, as well as stocks, Sir?

Gov. No, no, my Lord, he made no matter of business of it, in the least; for tho' he understands making a bargain as well as any man in the Alley, he never once talked of a settlement—all, all is left to my own honour—but he knows his man, that's pretty plain, I think——

Lord Sea. Very apparent, truly.

Gov. Do you think your Lordship can be ready to attend upon us to church by nine, to-morrow morning?

Lord Sea. To-morrow, Governor!

Gov. Yes, to-morrow is to be the happy day, nephew.

Lord Sea. As circumstances are drawing so near a conclusion, Sir, I will be free enough to tell you, that you must not think of Mrs. Frankly, for a wife.

Gov. Why that is frank and free enough, to be sure, my Lord; but I must have some better reason than a mere *ipse dixit*, as Nicholas calls it. I have

have always been a man of honour, to the ladies, my Lord.

Lord Sea. I approve your chivalry, Governor, but with this reserve, that you are sure your Ladies be also Ladies of honour, on their part; lest your knight-errantry should be dishonoured by your gallantry; and as it is happily not yet too late, I may venture to tell you that your present Dulcinea is totally devoid of such a character.

Gov. Not too late! Ay, truly, but it is, tho', for I have not even so much as an acknowledgment under her hand, for five hundred pounds I lent her, this very morning, to fee her lawyers; and I gave her a pair of ear-rings, not a month ago, that cost me five hundred pounds more. But if she has no honour, 'tis well she has some land, at least. Bull assures me that her jointure is a good six hundred, *per annum*.

Lord Sea. What! upon his estate, Governor?

Gov. I never heard he had one.

Lord Sea. Nor I either, I promise you; and I rather doubt his having a foot of ground to stand upon, in the Alley, much longer.

Gov. Don't say so, my Lord; you'll break my heart. If Bull has waddled out a lame duck, I may be an undone man, for aught I see.

Lord Sea. Matters may not be so bad as you apprehend; but at any rate I think you have reason to rejoice at having escaped being Mrs. Frankly's dupe, at least.

Gov. Rejoice! at what? that I have been deceived and disappointed in the woman I had set my heart upon, when it is too late in life to think of mending myself elsewhere. But I'll have my money and my jewels from her, if they are to be had, d'ye see, before we part.

I

Lord

Lord Sea. You'll find it rather a difficult matter, I fancy, to recover your property out of such hands; but I wish you success, and a good night, with all my heart, Governor. *[Exit.]*

Gov. A good night! fine talking, truly, after you have broke my rest. I don't believe I shall be able to get a wink of sleep, this month to come. I think I am even more disturbed, now, than when my poor Bab died, and I remember that I lay awake, that night, almost three hours, tho' I had not lost a farthing, neither.

Enter a Servant.

Pomp. A young Lady desires to see you, Sir.

Gov. What! a young Lady, did you say?

Pomp. Here she is herself, Sir. *[Exit.]*

Enter Lucy.

Gov. So, Mrs. Lucy, what! does your mistress want another five hundred, to refresh her lawyers, to-morrow, and has sent you to wheedle me out of it? Eh!

Lucy. No really, Sir, I am not the person you take me for. I would scorn to join in imposing on so worthy a gentleman, as your Excellency.

Gov. Worthy me no worthies, Mrs. Abigail, it won't do, I can tell you—she has mistaken her man, d'ye see—I am not so easily imposed upon as she may imagine.

Lucy. I am sure, Sir, it has broke my heart, to see how you have been cheated and deceived, both by Mr. Bull and Mrs. Frankly.

Gov. You acknowledge it, then. But I'll shew them the difference immediately, and Bull may look out

out for some fitter dupe to repair the honour and fortune of his family, by marrying his niece.

Lucy. His niece! why that, indeed, sounds well, Sir——

Gov. Why, is not Bull her uncle, girl?

Lucy. No more related to her, Sir, than you are. The very jewels you gave her, Sir, are gone, past redemption. Sold, Sir, to supply *her uncle's* necessities, and will never more be heard of, believe me.

Gov. I am struck dumb with amazement! But, if Bull be not her uncle, why should she bestow him her jewels, d'ye see?

Lucy. Lord, Sir, there may be closer connections, than relations, I suppose, in the world.

Gov. I shall be petrified! Why he is not her galant, sure, is he?

Lucy. I scorn to speak scandal, Sir; but if he be, he is not her only one, I can assure you; for Lord Seaton is another—Tho' the passion happens unluckily to be all on the wrong side there, I can answer for it—

Gov. My hair stands an end at her wickedness! As for you, girl, there take my purse, as a reward for your honesty, d'ye see—but never let me see you, or any thing that belongs to your mistress, more.

Lucy. So then, the best part of my scheme is disappointed, I find—I don't believe that he has even looked at me. (*Aside*). I thank your Excellency, and wish you a good night, Sir.

Gov. Good-bye to ye. Good-bye to ye. Get you out. Get you out. (*Pushing her off.*) In love with Lord Seaton! O the devil, the devil! what now in nature can make people such rogues! one

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hears, every day, here, of such pranks as would taint the very air of India, and breed a pestilence there. I'll go back, I'll go back again, in the first ship that sails, and spend the remainder of my life among men whose words are bonds, and where the ties of honour require no laws to bind them—But first I'll go maul my harpy—I'll break her night's rest, for her, and her heart too, if I can. The intriguing gipsy ! [*Exit.*]

END OF THE FOURTH ACT,

A C T

A C T V.

The GOVERNOR *and* NICHOLAS.

GOVERNOR.

I HAVE had a devilish bad night of it. If I had vented my rage, I might have got some sleep, perhaps—but she was in bed, and would not see me, forsooth.—Plaguy modest, to be sure. But I'll make bold to break her morning slumbers. I'll rouse her, that I will. Get me my breakfast, quickly—There's no good in fasting, d'ye see—Dispatch, I say, or I shall go without it—My rage will burst me—

Nich. I grieve to see your Excellency so much inflated with choler—but I obey. [Exit.

Enter SQUEEZEM.

Gov. Why, how now, Mr. Squeezem!

Squeez. O, Sir, you have made a fine hand of your affairs, with your boasted punctuality—*We have no bonds, in India,* forsooth. Commend me to the persons who are not ashamed to set their names to a piece of stamped paper. They are the men to do business with.

Gov. Why, what can be the meaning of all this! Did not Bull carry you the money, last night?
And

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And were you not to set out with the sun, this morning?

Squeez. No, really, Sir, Mr. Bull did not bring me a farthing; but I believe he has carried that, and himself off together, by the light of the moon; for he was not to be found at his own house, at day-break, when I called there; and I fancy that neither sun or moon will ever see him in England again.

Gov. So then 'tis pretty plain that I have been completely gulled, jilted, bulled and beared, by a professing scoundrel and a pretty face—

Squeez. What signifies all this, to your seat in the house? Honours, Sir, don't spring up like mushrooms, in a night—They are not to be had when, where, and how you please.

Gov. No, Sir, nothing is to be had as I please.—All's lost—all's gone—I see it—I know it—I'm an object of pity, Mr. Squeezem. So if you'll please to refund me the thousand I advanced to you—

Squeez. Why surely, Sir, you are not in earnest. Refund, quotha! Why, Sir, it was all gone, swallowed, eaten and drank up, in one day. Electioneering is your only true *sinking fund*, Governor. Potwallopers refund!

Enter NICHOLAS.

Nich. Sir, your Excellency's meal is prepared within.

Gov. Go eat it then—I have no appetite left.—Potwallopers! a thousand pounds potwalloped, in a day! impossible! I'll cram them with turtle, 'till they burst, d'ye see, and defy them to do it.

Nich. It is reported that Anthony and Cleopatra expended, at one supper—

Gov. Choke them with their supper, impertinent—I shall run mad, with vexation. What! a thousand pounds in a day, and not to have either my money, or myself returned, after all!

Squeez. Lord, Sir, how impatiently you talk! Why many, and many an honest gentleman has spent ten thousand, in the same way, and had no more for his money, than you have.

Gov. Get out of my sight, I advise you, while I can yet command my temper. A thousand pounds at a meal!

Squeez. As you seem a little indisposed, at present, Sir, I shall take your advice, and retire; but if any other snug, convenient seat should offer, in futuro, Sir, you may freely command the services of your most obedient, Bartholomew Squeezem.

[Exit.

Gov. You and your disservices may go to the vengeance together. I have got enough of electioning, and of courting too, for life, I think. I'll see Mrs. Frankly, this instant, and have justice on that villain Bull, if 'tis to be had in the land. Was there ever so unfortunate a man as I am! disappointed in every thing—plundered by every body! What a pack of troubles have I brought upon myself, without designing the least manner of mischief to any one alive!

[Exit.

Mrs. FRANKLY'S House.

Mrs. FRANKLY, alone.

Bull's absconding, and Lucy's deserting me, in so critical a situation, have happened most unluckily.

kily. What excuse can I make, for Bull's absence, to the Governor? He was here late, last night, and raving at being refused admittance. Fear of detection, what a curse art thou! O could the young and artless mind but know the agonies that dwell with guilt, it would prefer the humblest lot with peace, to all that splendid vice can e'er bestow.—But what have I to do with such reflections, now! No reply yet from Seaton—his cold unkindness stabs me to the heart—My dear Governor—

Enter the GOVERNOR, in a passion.

Gov. Thou worse than a vulture, or a kite—thou cruellest, and most ungrateful of women! I know not where to begin, nor in what language to speak of you.

Mrs. Frank. (What can this mean! Lucy has betrayed me, I fear. *Aside.*)

Gov. I am thoroughly acquainted with your arts, I know all your history at full length, d'ye see.

Mrs. Frank. I hope it has entertained you, Sir, for you seem to be much engaged with it.

Gov. Don't offer to interrupt me—Let me speak, I say. That villain Bull, that fellow that passed for your uncle, is no more related to you than the Great Mogul. He is your galant, it seems, and you meant to marry me, merely to make his fortune.

Mrs. Frank. Mr. Bull of all creatures, my galant! This is too ridiculous, Sir.

Gov. 'Tis true, for all that, as honest Lucy has assured me—and the very jewels I gave you, nay,

may, perhaps, the money I advanced to fee your lawyers, ungenerous woman, have been all sacrificed to him.

Mrs. Frank. Lucy! and so honest Mrs. Lucy is your informer, Sir! I give you joy of your authority.

Gov. Don't answer me, I say, thou harpy—I have not brought half my charges against you, yet.

Mrs. Frank. I shall not attempt to answer you, indeed, Sir, as you really appear to be quite out of your reason, at present, and there is no arguing with a madman.

Gov. If I am mad, 'tis you that have made me so—but your insolence shall not defend you. I will expose you and *your good uncle Bull*, to the whole world. I won't confine myself to one quarter of it—all India shall know how you have used me. Where are the ear-rings I gave you? Where are my jewels, I say? shew them to me, this instant. I insist upon seeing them, at least.

Mrs. Frank. How is that possible, pray, if I have already given them to Mr. Bull?—Delirious!

Gov. Her assurance amazes me—I thought she would have fallen at my feet and implored my pardon.

Mrs. Frank. No, really, Sir—injured innocence has a right to resent—

Gov. Injured innocence!—that word has almost choked me—This is too much—Then, Madam *Injured Innocence*, I have accused you wrongfully, it seems—

Mrs. Frank. So you may possibly find, Sir, when perhaps it may be too late to repent of it.

K

Gov.

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Gov. And why the plague don't you justify yourself then?

Mrs. Frank. So I would, Sir, if you were in a condition to hear reason.

Gov. Well, well—speak—speak freely.—I am perfectly cool—quite calm, Madam.

Mrs. Frank. Hear me, then. All this rage of yours proceeds from Lucy's having trumped up a false story—

Gov. A false story! Hell and the furies! then prove it so, Madam.

Mrs. Frank. Don't swear, Sir—remember you are perfectly cool—quite calm, you know.

Gov. Well, well, I am so, I had forgot—Go on, Madam, now, without interruption.

Mrs. Frank. Then first, Sir, give me leave to ask you if you are acquainted with the reason of Lucy's quitting my service?

Gov. Yes, Madam, because she could not bear to be a witness of your imposing on me.

Mrs. Frank. Just the reverse, Sir—I turned her out of my house, last night, for abusing you, ungenerous as you are.

Gov. Abusing me! Why, what could the minx find to say against me?

Mrs. Frank. How can you think, said she, of burying your youth, beauty, and fortune, in the arms of your grandfather! when there are so many—

Gov. Grandfather! confound the jade.—Let me hear no more of her impertinence, but come to the point, Madam; Where is *your uncle*, and where are my diamonds, d'ye see?

Mrs. Frank. Mr. Bull, Sir, is gone into Wiltshire, to bring up a witness to prove my dear Mr. Frankly's last will—and as to the diamonds, Sir,

Lucy, you say, has given you a full account of them.

Gov. Yes, yes, and a receipt in full, too, Madam—your pretended uncle has carried them into Wiltshire to bribe your evidence, I suppose.

Mrs. Frank. Mr. Bull has them, then! mighty well, Sir. And if I was to produce them now, what would you say, then, Sir?

Gov. Say! why really in such a case, Madam, I should say—hang me, if I know what I should say—but 'tis absolutely impossible—

Mrs. Frank. Then not to satisfy, but to shock you, look there—*(opening a casket. He starts.)*—Now take them back again, Sir, for as I prized them more as a token, than a gift, they have lost their value with your unkindness. *(Weeps.)*

Gov. I am confounded! I am dead! the very jewels I gave her, that's certain! That vile jade Lucy! I see you are innocent, Madam, and must implore your pardon for having doubted it.

Mrs. Frank. You ought not to have doubted it, Sir, nor have ventured to insult a woman of honour upon the testimony of a wretch, whom common sense might have informed you I should not have discarded, had it been in her power to have hurt me.

Gov. Why to be sure I might have thought of that, Madam, but you can't conceive what a pack of plausible lies she told me.—She said you were in love too with Lord Seaton, who despised you—nay his Lordship spoke to your disadvantage himself, also, and first cautioned me against marrying you.

Mrs. Frank. But surely now any person of common sense, Sir, would have considered his endeavour to prevent it, as a proof rather of love,

K 2 than

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than of hate—I soon perceived he had gained Lucy over to his interest, which was the chief reason of my discharging her; in revenge for which she invented all those abominable stories, and you were weak enough to believe them.

Gov. I have been weak enough, to be sure; but you shall find now that I am perfectly satisfied.

Mrs. Frank. You allow then, that you have been in the wrong, Sir—

Gov. Exceedingly.

Mrs. Frank. And that you have been duped by a woman—

Gov. Shamefully—I see it, now—I feel it—Yes, yes, I have been duped, indeed, with a vengeance.

Mrs. Frank. And you really do repent of your credulity.

Gov. Repent! shall hang myself if you do not forgive me.

Mrs. Frank. Well, well, then, I do forgive you, Sir.

Gov. And I ask your pardon, again and again—So now let us kiss and friends—kiss and friends, for life, d’ye see. I shall think every minute an age ’till we are one—we’ll be married, this very day. Let’s lose no time, d’ye see. I’ll stop home and bring Nicholas, directly, to give you away, and do you run in and prepare, so that there may be no waiting when we call on you.

Mrs. Frank. You trespass on my fondness, which pleads your cause so strongly; for had you less love, you would have had less jealousy; and the excess of one should ever atone for the violence of the other. And so I shall be ready to attend you, Sir.

[*Exit.*
Gov.]

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Gov. Why that's very good-natured, and very true, too. Yes, indeed, I do love her monstrously, or I should not have been so jealous. But for all this I shall discourse my Lord Seaton a little, before I am married; for I neither can, nor will be satisfied, till I have made him recant his calumny. [Exit.]

SCENE, Mrs. FREEMAN's House.

Enter Miss MELVILLE.

Char. The hurry and agitation I passed thro', yesterday evening, have discomposed my spirits so much that I find it impossible to rest. Mrs. Freeman is not yet up, so that I have sufficient leisure to reflect on the extraordinary adventures of yesterday, which I confess appear to me, now, more like a vision than a fact. I am impatient till all this mystery is explained, that I may have an opportunity of clearing my conduct to my amiable friend. If the weight only of an imputed crime be so hard to bear, what a burden must real guilt be! Lord Seaton said something, I think, of Colonel Ramsay. I dare not flatter my hopes about his arrival, as Mrs. Freeman knows nothing of it yet. But see, beyond a doubt my wishes are accomplished—

Enter Colonel RAMSAY.

You are welcome to England, Sir.

Col. I have been so long absent, Madam, that I own myself rather surprized at your recollection of a person whom I hoped, for your own sake, you

you had totally forgotten; and you must pardon me if I also add that my wonder is a good deal increased, by seeing you at present in Mrs. Freeman's house.

Char. What can this mean! Surely 'tis you, Sir, who have forgotten both yourself and me, or after two tedious years of absence it were not possible we should meet thus.

Col. I fancy, Madam, that the absence of an injured lover does not appear tedious to those who enjoy the presence of a favoured one. Lord Seaton, Madam, has sufficiently consoled you for my loss.

Char. Lord Seaton!

Col. You seem surprized; but I am too well informed of your connection. However, Madam, I did not mean to upbraid, or intrude upon you, now. I came here only to see my sister, and have but a short time to spare to her, from a very particular and pressing engagement.

Char. Be your engagements what they may, Sir, I have a right to expect you should explain the meaning of your present conduct towards me, as far at least as it respects my character.

Col. You speak, Madam, as if you thought you still retained the power you once had over me; but you have forfeited it, and I am no longer now the dupe of my own weakness, or of your deceit.

Char. O Ramsay, how have I deserved this treatment?

Col. (I cannot bear her tears. *Aside.*) I wish not, Madam, to offend or wound you—you are mistress of your own actions, and all I shall further say, upon this subject, is, that had your new engagement

gement been more for your own honour, your perfidy might have been more pardonable to one who respected your character, as much as he admired your person.

Char. I do not comprehend you, Sir. What engagements have I entered into, inconsistent with that preference I had too hastily, I fear, confessed for you?

Col. The ties of hearts like mine are formed by honour only, Madam, nor could I ever take advantage of a woman's fondness to hurt her innocence, or wound her fame. Lord Seaton is a more modern kind of lover, Madam.

Char. Lord Seaton again! What can you mean by him? Is he not married, Sir?

Col. For his unhappy lady's sake, as well as yours, I would he were not. The woman I once loved might then have had some excuse.

Char. I can sustain this injury no longer—Have you not known me from my earliest youth?

Col. No, Madam, 'tis plain I did not. My fond imagination had indeed conceived a fair idea from Miss Melville's form—a heart replete with honour, love and constancy! virtues too seldom found in your frail sex, and it was vanity in me to hope I should engross so rare a treasure.

Char. What have I done to forfeit your opinion? But I will condescend to waive the pride of injured virtue, and tell you, Sir, that you are much deceived.

Col. I have been so, I own, but the delirium's fled. My time is precious, now—I came hither on other purpose, Madam, and neither thought, or wished to have met you here.

Char. Can it be possible the time should come, when Ramsay should not wish to see me!

Col.

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Col. Too many hours have I, alas, devoted to the fond impatience of seeing her I loved.—'Twas the reward I promised to myself, for toil, for danger, for the still greater pangs of absence—and how have you repaid my anxious hope!

Char. If the most constant, unabated tenderness and esteem could have repaid the sufferings you pretend, I should not now be deemed your debtor; nor would a lover, such as you would seem, have listened to a tale invented by some fiend to blast my honour. O Ramsay! 'tis now, alas, too plain, you never loved.

Col. (I know not what to think—she speaks with confidence, and looks with innocence—yet Lady Seaton surely could not invent a falsehood. Perhaps I have been too rash; and yet I have not time to repair my error, now. My honour is elsewhere too far engaged, at present, and the time draws near. *Afide.*) If ever we should meet again, Miss Melville, you will be then convinced that I have loved.

Char. What do you say? If ever we should meet! Do not distract me, Sir—you must not leave me till this riddle is explained, and you convinced both of my truth and love.

Col. You must excuse me, Madam, for the present. Tho' 'tis a subject of the dearest import, I cannot now attend the explication. (*Going.*)

Enter a Servant.

Serv. Lord Seaton, Madam. [*Exit.*]

Char. Lord Seaton! What can his visit mean?

Col. O, fair dissembler! my doubts are all explained.

Enter

Enter Lord SEATON.

Lord Sea. I come, Madam, to make my apology for having been, tho' inadvertently, the cause of any anxiety or distress to you.

Char. Indeed, my Lord, I know not how I have deserved it, but you have been the source of most mortifying difficulties and distresses to me; but surely you will now be candid and generous enough to undeceive this gentleman, my friend—I know not what to stile him—Colonel Ramsay, with regard to me.

Col. O spare yourself and him the trouble, Madam; you are mistaken, I am not deceived; I know Lord Seaton well, and know Miss Melville, too.

Lord Sea. Blind and ungrateful as you are to love and friendship, yet for Miss Melville's sake—

Col. O, Sir, I doubt not but, for her dear sake, your Lordship may generously condescend to vouch her honour, with the loss of yours. (But, my Lord, you know there is another mode of satisfying me. *Aside to Lord Seaton.*)

Enter Lady SEATON, who runs to Miss Melville, and embraces her.

Lady Sea. My dear, my injured Charlotte, I have not words to atone the wrong I have done you, but hope in Colonel Ramsay to obtain an advocate more powerful than myself, for your forgiveness.

L

Col.

Col. (This surely must be illusion all ! my feet are rooted to the spot I stand upon with wonder ! *Aside.*)

Char. My dear Lady Seaton, this is too good, too condescending, and too kind ! I meant to have gone to you.

Lady Sea. No, my friend, nothing can be too much from one who has injured innocence and worth like yours by doubting of your virtue, for a moment.

Char. I cannot comprehend this mystery—it is impossible that you should wrong me. Some spell has surely been cast round me, for Ramsay too has doubted of my truth and love.

Lady Sea. I, only I, who formed the charm, can break it. (My weak unjust suspicions have betrayed you into error ; your censure and resentment therefore should light on me alone. *To the Colonel.*)

Char. I am perplexed——What can all this mean ?

Col. It means, my Charlotte, that my too hasty credulity has hurried me into a fault ; which I can never hope you should forgive, the suspecting truth and virtue such as yours.

Char. To doubt of pardon, on repentance, aggravates the crime ; for who that pretends not to perfection in themselves, shall dare to be implacable to another's failings. But still I am in the dark and on the rack, to know how all this strange confusion has been conjured up.

Lady Sea. It arose intirely from my indiscretion in letting drop to Markam my having met you at Mrs. Frankly's. She happened to see the Colonel immediately after, and informed him of all, and perhaps more than she knew. •

Col.

Col. At Mrs. Frankly's!

Cbar. Yes, at Mrs. Frankly's. Take care, Colonel; relapses are dangerous to susceptible constitutions—but I shall at more leisure account to you for so extraordinary an incident.

Col. And I shall most patiently wait 'till you think proper to gratify merely my curiosity, in that particular.

Cbar. But mine is not to be satisfied, 'till I know how Lady Seaton should come there.

Lady Sea. And I am ready to indulge you.—Unhappy at your absence, my dear Charlotte, I ordered my servant to make every possible inquiry to find you out.—He saw you, by chance, going into Mrs. Frankly's, and was informed you lived there. I immediately flew to request your company, in hopes of agreeably surprising both you and the Colonel with an unexpected interview, at my house. You know the unhappy mistake occasioned then by Mrs. Frankly's behaviour, for which I again ask both my Lord's pardon, and yours.

Lord Sea. The nobleness of your behaviour, upon that occasion, my dear, has fully entitled you to the warmest gratitude of every person present, tho' you yet know not how highly meritorious your conduct has been, to us all.

Col. I blush to think how I have injured your Lordship, by my rashness, and here throw myself on your generosity for forgiveness.

Lord Sea. You shall not stoop to ask it, Colonel—forgiveness we bestow upon our enemies—but we are now, and ever shall be friends.

L 2

Enter

Enter a Servant.

Ser. A gentleman seeing your Lordship's carriage at the door, inquired if you were here, and desires to speak with you.

Lord Sea. I shall attend him. [*Exit Servant.*] By the degree of familiarity he uses, I fancy it must be the Governor.

Char. If it be, my Lord, pray desire him to walk up.

Lord Sea. You see, Madam, he introduces himself without a gentleman-usher.

Enter the GOVERNOR.

Gov. I have been at your house, to look for you, my Lord.

Lord Sea. Well, Governor, and now you have found me, what are your commands?

Gov. Why, my Lord, I have both questions and commands to propose to you, d'ye see, tho' I think you have been more inclined to a game of cross-purposes, than any thing else, lately. But in plain English, I think you have behaved very ungenerously in this affair of my marriage, let me tell you.

Char. His marriage! bless us, with whom?

Lord Sea. Your charge is severe, Governor; but, prithee, explain yourself, for at present I don't understand you.

Gov. I shall make it plain enough, I warrant you—I mean, my Lord, that you have traduced the

the character of a woman, whose honour I am bound to support, by every principle of a man, and I never yet put up with an affront, nor ever will, d'ye see.

Lord Sea. Spoken like a champion, stout and strong, Governor.

Gov. I don't mean to act the bravo, my Lord, tho' I have faced a Nabob, at the head of his forces, before now; but all I desire of you, at present, is, that as a man of honour you will come with me and ask Mrs. Frankly's pardon, before we go to church together.

Lord Sea. Indeed, Governor, you must excuse me from going through such a ceremony; and also for endeavouring to prevent your going through a more serious one, with a woman who is—

Gov. Don't venture to say a word against her beauty, or her virtue, my Lord, or I may not be able to command myself, perhaps.

Lord Sea. The goodness and generosity of your own heart, Governor, render you too liable to imposition. 'Tis the nature of man to impute their own principles to others, be they good or bad.

Gov. Why, I am not apt to be suspicious, that's certain; and when I met you at my pretty widow's, yesterday evening, I little thought that we had been rivals, d'ye see.

Lord Sea. To convince you, Sir, as well as the rest of this company, that I have no farther designs upon that lady, I here resign into your hands the last favour I received from hers. Read that, Governor. (*Gives him Mrs. Frankly's letter.*)

Gov. (*Putting on his spectacles.*) Hey day!—What's this! a billet to you! She has been very nimble in sending it, truly.—I thought I had made tolerable

tolerable haste in finding you, myself; but my legs are none of the best, to be sure. (*Opens the letter, and reads.*) "Notwithstanding the inhumanity of your unkind treatment of me." You see, my Lord, she resents your behaviour, mightily. "My fondness has triumphed over my resentment, and I am still weak enough to desire another interview." Why, what can all this mean! This letter should have been directed to me——

Lord Sea. Proceed, Sir, and the mystery will soon vanish.

Gov. "Tho' by seeing you again, I may possibly hazard the breaking off an advantageous match, with a man I detest." Hell and the furies! what is this? Does she mean me? the crocodile of the Nile, and the shark of the Ganges! Had she nobody to play off her monkey tricks upon, but me! Detest me!

Lord Sea. Compose your rage, good Governor, and finish the epistle.

Gov. Compose the devil, my Lord. Why I can't see a word more of it—I am struck blind with passion—this comes of my falling in love, foolishly, and wanting to be married to a young girl, truly.

Lord Sea. You are cheaply off, Governor, at the expence only of a little laughing, and I think I have a right to my share of that—Ha, ha, ha——

Gov. Cheaply off! now I think that, what between money and mortification, I have paid plaguy dear for my experiment—but I'll have my revenge, d'ye see, and shall go, this moment, in pursuit of it.

Lord Sea. I must stop you, Sir, 'till your passion has subsided a little, and then I will venture to trust to your good nature.

Gov. Don't tell me of good nature, my Lord, she has made my heart as hard as a rock.

Enter a Servant, with a Letter to the Governor.

Serv. The messenger waits for an answer, Sir.
[Exit.]

Gov. What's this! another billet-doux from the traitress!

Char. He's in a horrid passion, my Lord.

Lord Sea. Not without reason, I assure you, Madam.

Gov. (Reading.) I shall burst with rage.—There never was such a villainous proceeding. A rascally coachmaker, a varnishing Scoundrel, I think that's his name, my Lord, threatens to arrest me for a debt I never contracted, because the fellow thought I had been married, this morning, d'ye see.—It would have been a pretty sort of incident, truly, to have happened on one's wedding-day.

Lord Sea. I apprehend, Governor, that this would not have been the only circumstance of the kind you would have had to celebrate your nuptials, if you had married that lady.

Gov. No, no, I did not fight Gentoos, Marattoes, Seapoys, and climates, d'ye see, to be bamboozled out of my money, at home.

Lord Sea. Except by a pretty woman, Governor.

Gov. Nor by her neither, when I find her false; and so Mr. Vanish may arrest Mrs. Frankly, as soon as he pleases, for me.

Lord

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Lord Sea. No, Sir, that debt I shall take upon myself, with pleasure, for the happiness I have received, through Mrs. Frankly's means, of knowing and esteeming Lady Seaton as I ought. Besides, a woman in distress, however incurred, is always intitled to the compassion and protection of a man of honour.

Gov. Nay, for that matter, my Lord, let me have but a little of my own way, d'ye see, and I can be as liberal as the best of you. I am passionate, but not severe; and so I forgive the injury, and shall discharge that debt; for methinks a man's mind and his means must be miserably poor, indeed, who cannot afford to give, and forgive, too—

Col. Nobly said, Sir—I find you have brought over not only the wealth, but the humanity of the East Indians, along with you.

Lord Sea. His tastes and manners may be foreign, perhaps, Colonel, but his good-nature and generosity are true English staple. A Briton need never go a trafficking for principles.

Gov. Well, take me as I am—I have bought some wisdom for myself, at present, for I shall not so readily believe that the women are in love with me, now, as they might have been, some thirty years ago. And so I shall think no more about a wife, for some time at least, d'ye see; unless I should renew my courtship to my old passion, Miss Melville, here.

Char. Take care of that, Governor, lest you should make the Colonel jealous.

Gov. Nay, if you are inclined to list with him, d'ye see, I'll keep clear of you; for 'tis dangerous meddling with other men's wives, now-a-days, I hear.

Col.

A WIFE IN THE RIGHT. 89

Col. If our modern marriages, Sir, were contracted upon the same principles I flatter myself ours is likely to be, a thorough love and esteem for each other, we should neither have so many libertine husbands, or faithless wives.

True worth alone can form the charm that binds,
And rivet beauty's chains upon ~~our~~ minds.

END OF THE FIFTH ACT.

M

EPILOGUE,

BY A FRIEND.

Spoken by Mrs. MATTOCKS.

TIS very fine, indeed! all match'd I see,
All happy, all provided for, but me:
Blown up and ruin'd here—'tis a strange notion,
You'll say, but I'm resolv'd to cross the ocean;
I'll e'en equip me for the Indian route;
Seaton and Ramsay join to fit me out:
Bull says he's sure I need not then despair,
For British features bear a premium there.
Even this homely face would charm, they say,
Amongst the copper beauties of Bombay;
And she who in a croud would scarcely pass
With us, would be a Venus, at Madras.
Pantbeon, Opera, Playhouse, Fantoccini,
Farewel—I'll go, and be a Nabobini:
Or, if that scheme, perchance, should not succeed,
E'en wed a Seapoy chief, and mend the breed.
What if one's husband is a little frightful,
Where every thing besides is so delightful.
'Twill be so charming, on a summer's day,
For forty slaves to fan me as I lay,
Or on rich carpets free from noise and burry,
Sit cross-legg'd with my spouse, and feast on Curry.
If I've a taste for baubles, my good man,
Will load me with old China and Japan.
Diamonds on diamonds heap'd, and pearly rows,
For hair, ears, neck, and breast, perhaps my nose:
No filthy hackneys there, so poor and mean,
Give me twelve Seapoys and a palanquin.

Pll

EPILOGUE.

*I'll keep a little squadron at my call,
And make my first grand visit in a shawl.
But must I leave my little Bull behind?
No, hang it, after all 'twould be unkind.
The fellow may be useful, he shall go;
For he can write, or underwrite, you know.
And many a worse, I heard a sweet bird sing,
Goes out a writer, and comes home a king—
A writer here is quite another thing!*

}

*So says our female author of to-night;
Poor soul, I hear she's in a horrid fright,
She has sent her little vessel off to sea,
And I am factor for the company—
Grant her, ye Critics, a few prosperous gales,
Let your applause but fill our swelling sails;
Do you insure her cargo safe and sound,
And Bull shall underwrite five hundred pound.
The author for your passport trembling stands,
And hopes you'll grant it under all your hands.*

F I N I S.

